The London School of Economics and Political Science

Peripheral Nationhood: Being Israeli in Kiryat Shemona

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Declaration

Abstract

The thesis provides a case study for how settler colonialism intertwined with ethno-nationalism to shape social identification in the Israeli town of Kiryat Shemona. Jews from Arab and Muslim lands were categorized by Zionist nation-builders as Mizrahim and disproportionally placed on the geographic and socio-economic margins of Israeli society to Judaise territory, to prevent the return of the displaced indigenous Palestinian population and to provide cheap labour for Ashkenazi settlements. They were excluded from the Ashkenazi-dominated centre of power, yet included as essential members of a militaristic frontier ethos. The thesis explores how Mizrahim negotiated Israeliness from the margins within the dynamics of ethnocratic exclusion and inclusion, in what I have termed peripheral nationhood. It examines the Israeli State's attempt to mould loyal subjects through Hebrew education, national ceremonies and military campaigns. In everyday life, Mizrahim contested the socio-economic and cultural hegemony of the Ashkenazi through ethnic and transnational identifications and practices. Simultaneously, their support for the nation-in-arms and creative self-fashioning as 'strong' and 'civilized' reinforced the dominant logic of ethno-nationalism. Mizrahi residents redeployed stereotypes and an Oriental stigma in their descriptions of Mizrahim, Russian-speaking Israelis and Arabs to elevate their own social status and position in the ethnocracy. The nation was only intermittedly salient as a category of belonging, thus challenging theories of 'everyday nationalism' that consider it omnipresent. During the Israeli war on Gaza in 2008/2009, sentiments of national unity were heightened, and the border Mizrahim appeared to be move and/or moved themselves from the periphery to the centre of the nation as key actors in the moral legitimization of war. The dissertation argues that the qualities that make up peripheral nationhood are coeval with construction of national unity as a colonial practice by the centre.

Contents

List of Figures

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Introduction

Kiryat Shemona is an Israeli border town situated near the Lebanese border in the Upper Galilee populated predominantly by Mizrahim (Jews descending from Arab and Muslim countries).[1] The goal of the Zionist settler colonial movement was to construct a homogenous national identiy. This entailed the expansion and control over contested territory and a clear boundary between the Arab and Jewish national collectives (Veracini 2010:5). With mass immigration to the newly established Israeli state in 1948, Jews from Arab and Muslim countries were racialized and orientalised as Mirahi Jews with non-European pasts. On the one hand, they were perceived as an integral part of the national community and as the expression of its primordial foundations. On the other hand, they suffered from ethno-racial discrimination and a policy of cultural erasure (Shenav 2006:192). Mizrahim became Zionism's internal other, only partly included into the Ashkenazi-dominated Zionist nation.

During the 1950s Mizrahi immigrants were disproportionally placed by the government in semi-urban development towns, in peripheral regions to the south and north for economic, security and settlement reasons. These towns were seen as an integral part of the management of the conflict with the Arabs. The new towns supplied Ashkenazi settlements with cheap labour, populated remote districts to prevent the return of the displaced Palestinian population and created a human militarized frontier against the neighbouring Arab countries considered hostile to the new state. The Mizrahim became "trapped" by Israeli nation-building on the geographic and socio-economic margins of society, positioned between the dominant socio-economic and cultural Ashkenazi elite and the Palestinian population. Their belonging has crystallized between Israeli-Ashkenazi-Jewish and Arab culture, between inclusion and exclusion.

Over the years, Kiryat Shemona has been the frequent target of Katyusha rocket-attacks, producing fear and anxiety and a shared perception of common threats and dangers. Starting in the late 1980s, neo-liberal privatisation of state-owned enterprises and mass immigration of Jews and non-Jews from the former Soviet Union have

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[1] The term Mizrahi (pl. Mizrahim) literally means "Eastern" or "Oriental." It's meaning overlaps with the older term, Sephardi (m). Prior to the emergence of the term Mizrahi, Arab Jews was a commonly used designation (Shoat 1988:27). I have decided to use Mizrahi, as a term that is widely used by modern scholarship and public discourse.

increased unemployment and labour competition. From the perspective of nationalism from above, the most notable response to the Ashkenazi political hegemony and existential uncertainty has been the intensification of Mizrahim's bond with the political right and regional forms of ethno-nationalism. The Mizrahi ethno-class in border towns has voted heavily for right-wing parties such as the ultra-nationalistic Yisrael-Beitenu and Likud. The interrelationship between neoliberal reforms and Jewishness was a key factor in the rise of the party and ethno-religious movement Shas[2] that draws most of its electoral support from the peripheral Mizrahi religious lower classes (Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006).

This dissertation explores how the boundary of Israeliness was negotiated and reproduced, undermined and contested amongst Mizrahim in their daily exercises of labour, neighbourhood, household, kinship and self. By examining the character, dynamics and variable salience of everyday nationalism, it challenges methodologies that typically overstate national and ethnic identity and fill the categories of belonging with conventionally political content. In addition, I explore 'non-nationalist' and 'non-ethnic' ways in which Mizrahim experience belonging and exclusion, such as family, class, religion and region.

The dissertation suggests that there exist a particular context of Israeli nationalism that I have termed *peripheral nationhood*, which entails a negotiation of hegemonic nationnesss by peripheral minorities on the margins of the state. Peripheral nationhood contests the cultural-political hegemony of secular Ashkenazi Israeliness, while it reinforces the militaristic, religious and Eurocentric definitions of Israeliness. In the context of ordinary insecurity and suspicion it produces coping strategies such as self-fashioning as 'strong', as well as material and symbolic ties to the West and nostalgia for an imagined 'Eastern' past. Even in a context of perceived permanent absence of peace, my informants did not identify as nationalists in all situations, thus challenging theories of nationalism that social actors are always nationalist (Billig 1995:6).

In the center you can more easily critique and defy nationalizing forces, whereas amongst Mizrahi ethno-class in a border town, peripheral nationhood is integral to the Zionist frontier ethos. In the border town there was little divergence over militarism due

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[2] Shas is a Hebrew acronym for Sephardi Torah Guardians (Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006).

to a shared feeling of common threats and social mobility through the IDF. During the build-up to war national politicians and media aligned the border town with the centre as essential members of the nation, thus moving them from a stigmatized periphery to a national frontier. The Mizrahim were used in the moral legitimization of war and perceived as guardians of national territory. My informants considered themselves relevant to the centre and invested more emotional energy in the symbols of nationhood and in fashioning themselves into nationalized subjects (Jean-Klein 2001:90). In ordinary times of insecurity, the deep divisions in Israeli society created competing claims over Israeliness, while during wartime, national unity was heightened. Their marginalized position, yet centrality during wartime, might explain why protests by Mizrahim, although consistent, have not been intense and have largely fallen within the 'legitimate' boundaries of Zionist political discourse.

Theoretical and methodological approaches to everyday nationalism

Nationalism is the project to make the political unit, the state (or polity) congruent with the cultural unit, the nation (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008). Attempts to accomplish this congruence have been studied from a variety of perspectives. The classic debates in studies of nationalism have been divided between primordialists and modernists. The former emphasize the deep roots, ancient origins and emotive power of national attachment (Smith 2003). Modernists conceptualise nations as primarily modern constructs shaped by capitalism, industrialization, the growth of communication and transportation networks, and the powerfully integrative and homogenizing forces of the modern state (Gellner 2006, Anderson 1983). While the classic debates between modernist and primordialist have made a contribution to theorizing nations and nationalism, these approaches have mostly been concerned with defining *what is a nation.*

State institutions and practices are central in the production of nations as categories for identification and imagining. Nationalism from 'above' seeks to define and bound the nation, to construct and maintain the boundaries and internal organization of the national. Modern nations are re-imagined (Anderson 1983), reinvented (Hobsbawm 1991) and re-narrated (Bhaba 1990). However, showing the constructedness and routine reproduction of nationalism does not explain why these constructions are invoked (or ignored) by social actors. In order to appreciate the

11

variable meaning and salience of nationhood, it is not sufficient to focus solely on state-sponsored construction and elite manipulation. Hobsbawm argues that while nationalism is "constructed essentially from above, it cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is, in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist" (Hobsbawm 1991:10).

By opposing the supposition that the nation is only ideologically produced, scholars have shown how nationhood is negotiated and reproduced (Herzfeld 1997) in everyday life (Billig 1995, Brubaker 2008). With his well-known and widely cited book *Banal Nationalism*[3] (1995) Billig draws attention to the unnoticed everyday habits that contributes to the ideological reproduction of nations. He expresses concerns with studies of nationalism that privilege macro instrumental processes over others. Macro 'methodological nationalism' has placed contemporary nationalism outside the civilized and outside the domain of the everyday. If nationalism is applied only to forceful social movements and extraordinary circumstances, something slips from theoretical awareness. It is as if the "flags on those filling-station forecourts do not exist" (1995:38). Billih argues that the nation with its symbols and rhetoric is flagged routinely in everyday life. As well as flags hanging unnoticed on public buildings, ideas of nation and home are embedded in our language and practices that provide banal reminders of nationhood. This banal nationalism routinely reproduces a taken-for-granted reality composed of sovereign, discrete nations. The ongoing production of a hegemonic discourse gets its power from its apparent naturalness. Nationalism must therefore be conceptualized as 'a form of life which is daily lived in a world of nation-states' (Billig 1995:68).

The shift to routine and everyday life makes Billig's theoretical contribution relevant to contemporary anthropological studies of nationalism. By focusing on the mundane level of everyday life we are getting closer to the banal reproductions of nationhood. The shift from the more macro-scale theorizing to a focus on everyday life has had consequences for how scholars approach agency in the study of the 'nation'. Brubaker argues that macro-approaches to the study of nationalism treat nations as collective individuals, capable of coherent, focused collective action (Brubaker 1996:15). He suggests viewing national groups as constructed, contingent, fluctuating

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[3] The formulation builds on Hanna Arendt's reflection on the "banality of evil" (1963).

and having elusive boundaries rather than as static categories (Brubaker 1998). Instead of focusing on nations as real groups, we should focus on nationhood and *nationness,* on the nation as a practical category and the ways it can come to structure perception, to inform thought and experience, and to organize discourse and political action (Brubaker 1996:7). An analytical distinction between subject-description by institutions and the actual processes of self-identification and self-understanding can shed valuable light on the relationship between the individual and the social in their production and everyday workings of ethnicity and ethnicized categories (Brubaker 2000).

In the context of increasing ethno-nationalism and neo-Zionism, it is tempting to adopt a nation-centered perspective or methodological nationalism. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, the treatment of minority-populations, the many wars, do not this demonstrate the reality and power of nations? However, nationalism is not engendered by nations. It is produced and induced by political fields of particular kinds. Nationalism, although ideologically produced, is locally negotiated.

Jean-Klein (2001) is critical of scholarship that tends to see "nationalism as a category of practice committed by one group (rendered active and immoral) against another (passive, but innocent)". This polarised analytical approach ignores nationalist production in everyday life; in other words, "self-nationalization" by ordinary national subjects who fashion themselves into nationalist subjects. Her ethnographic work focuses on nationalist production in Palestine during the second *Intifada* focusing on domestic space and neighborhood as key sites for the production of nationalism and resistance. In contrast to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, individuals from the Mizrahi ethno-class in Kiryat Shemona belong to the Jewish majority population in Israel and are not protesting the fundamental tenant of Zionism, that Israel should be a Jewish nation-state. However, the focus on authentic self-fashioning represents both an important shift in the study of nationalism and in the study of the Mizrahi ethno-class that are located in a 'third space' between definational borders of race, culture, class and nation.

Challenging dominant nationhood from the margins

Mizrahi is shorthand for a combination of frontiers and markers. Scholars have tried to deconstruct these markers, asking why they become frozen in social categories or institutionalized by a combination of legal, bureaucratic and political mechanisms

(Shoat 1999, Khazzom 2005, Shenhav 2006, Yiftachel 2006). Scholarship has concentrated on the absorption of Mizrahim in Israel (Eistenstadt 1954), their encounter with the state, their mobilization through politics (Peled 1998, Dahan-Kalev 1999, Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006), their spatial marginalization (Yiftachel 2006) their mobility or immobility and their place within the Israeli stratification and political systems (Swirski 1989, Smooha 1993). Chetrit (2000) explores the emergence of Mizrahi resistance through an analysis of social and political movements such as the Black Panthers, Tami, Shas and the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow, that all have challenged the hegemony of Ashekanzi Zionism .

Research at the macro and discursive levels reveals much about how Jews from Arab and Muslim countries were crystallized by Ashkenazi settlers into one category as Mizrahim. However, it tells us less about the diverse subjective experiences within that category of belonging or various reasons for why essentialist identities continue to be invoked and often deeply felt. While Mizrahim have a voice through collective activism, political contestation and cultural articulation, ethnic and national categories are also produced and reproduced through everyday experiences (Brubaker 2006:11).

As is conventional knowledge in the field of anthropology, ethnic and other identities are not static and fixed, but boundary- exceeding and filled with internal contradiction. An anthropological approach to the study of nationalism can shed light on how the Zionist ethno-racial hierarchy is not only institutionally produced and enforced, but also pinned to and negotiated in the intimate register of neighbourhood, family and household (Cohen 1993:5, Jean-Klein 2001:86). The methodological focus on everyday life can move beyond the static categories of Israeli identity, which is excessively laden with ideological declaration. It can capture the situational dynamics of belonging and not-belonging and shed light on the contingency, (in)consistencies and meaningfulness in Mizrahim's understanding of themselves as nationalist subjects. The dissertation aims at building analytical and methodological bridges from the macro-processes of national and ethnic subject-ascription to the reproduction and contestation of these categories by Mizrahim themselves in everyday life.

The production of in-betwen ethno-classes is intrisic to settler colonial societies that turn peripheral communites into relatively weak structurally placed between a powerful founding group and excluded and dispossessed indigenous populations or other groups of exogenous 'others' such as labor migrants (Tzfadia & Yacobi 2011, Veracini 2010, Kimmerling 2008, Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995). Colonial settler

societies code in-between minorites as foundational elements of a 'nation', and yet at the same time mark them as racially and culturally different from the national identity (Das & Poole 2004).

The agency of actors in such 'in-between-ness' has been analyzed as a third space (Bhaba 1994) or in the Israeli case, a twilight zone (Yiftachel 2006). Steffen Jensen's (2008) ethnography amongst the coloured people of the Cape Flats treats a population caught in a similar twilight zone as Mizrahim. Apartheid turned them into a separate race group as coloured people, placed them between white and black physically, socially and psychologically, and fixed them to the stereotype of *skollie*. Jensen examines how the population in Hedeveld creates a sense of dignity in the face of racism, poverty, violence and dispossession. They are rejecting definitions imposed on them by dominant society. Some turn to church, family and neighborhood while others restore to violence to gain respect and turn it into a form of heroism. The female relatives of these men, caught in a twilight world of ambiguities, escape into narratives of denial.

Smadar Lavie has analyzed the search for identity amongst Palestinian and Mizrahi intellectuals by referring to *blow-ups,* or the explosion and fragmentation of identities in postmodern borderlands. The Palestinian and Mizrahi 'Third World Israelis' must continually strive 'to articulate the locus and the process of the intersections where Arab and European, Palestinian and Israeli, Mizrahi and Ashkenazi, clash and merge' (Lavie 1996:90). From the perspective of Lavie and Jensen the in-between borderland is both a creative zone of negotiation as well of domination and control. I apply this insight to the particular context of an ethno-class population on the margins of the state. The Mizrahi border residents were not only formed by passively inherited legacies and state-imposed nationalism, but also by negotiating national belonging and social categorisation within the dynamics of ethnocratic exclusion and inclusion, through peripheral nationhood.

The variable salience of nationalism

Although this thesis places nationalism at the centre, it is equally important to show the many parts of social experience that cannot be reduced to nationalism. While the field of nationalism and ethnicity has grown impressively since the 1990s, academic scholarship of nationalism from below has not attached enough importance to the

variable salience of nationhood. Billig presents everyday nationalism as omnipresent without paying sufficient focus to when the nation is made relevant. He argues that "nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the *endemic* condition" (Billig 1995:6). The notion of banal nationalism, while useful for examining the implicit, everyday and routine reproduction of nationness cannot adequately capture situational nationalist self-identification. Billig's perspective focuses mainly on textual analysis and his argument is more concerned with the naturalized social reproduction of social categories. A sole focus on discourse and the external symbols and flagging of nationhood cannot account for change, negotiation or in what situations the nation matters to ordinary people. While seeking to analyze how nationness and ethnic identification work in a variety of forms, but public and private, we have to be sensitive to their limits (Brubaker 2006:364). National identification and what it is believed to imply can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods. Even in a country where ethno-nationalism is an all-powerful force, nationalism is not all pervasive in everyday life. We still need to explain those aspects of everyday life where the nation is not salient. The nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) refers to only one of the multiplicity of relationships and associations with which people live. Regional and local attachments, activities and relationships also shape and inform self-identification. A one-sided focus on "finding" the nation can lead one to a theoretical and analytical blindness regarding the many aspects of life that are not nation-centered. This thesis moves beyond the reductionist notion that the nation matters at all times, to explore the various situations in which the nation matters.

Research methods and ethics

Israeli society, as part of one of the most controversy-ridden conflicts constantly at the fore of international media, is a particular sensitive and inherently politicised topic to study. In Norway, telling friends that I study Mizrahi social experience and Israeli nation-building, I am often met with the questions "are you pro-Israeli or anti-Israeli?" Such a dichotomy regarding the conflict unfortunately prevails both in scholarly production and media discourse. Focused on framing actors as Zionist, post-Zionist or anti-Zionist, the complexities and nuances are often missed. This is a paradox in the context of Israel, a country where the multicultural and religious reality on the ground should spark interest in understanding the nuances on the ground.

In addition to a shorter stay in Israel in the summer of 2006, I spent a total of twenty months in Israel from 2007 until 2009. During this period, I went through a process of becoming Israeli myself, but perhaps not the Israeli many of my informants and indeed friends would have wanted me to become. On the one hand, I immersed myself in Israeli society. I opened a bank account in BankHapoalim (a requirement for temporary residents) and I obtained my driving license in the Northern Israeli town of Metual. I enjoyed the warmth of countless Shabbat dinners and I socialized with Israelis of all backgrounds in the *boa* (bubble) of Tel-Aviv. On the other hand, I became increasingly disillusioned with the right-wing political turn, highly critical of the occupation of Palestinian land, and at times stunned over the salience of racism. I witnessed how villages of Bedouins were demolished, how Palestinians were humiliated at Israeli checkpoints, the poverty of Jewish neighborhoods in Haifa, the uncertainty of immigrant workers from the Philippines. I saw how Palestinians living inside Israel tried their best to cope and create a future for themselves in a state where they are confined to the status of second-degree citizens.

The academic year 2007/2008, I had an official affiliation with the University of Haifa where I studied Hebrew. This year, including a shorter Hebrew language course *(ulpan)* in Netanya the summer of 2006, was covered by scholarships granted to me by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although my Hebrew studies were funded by the Israeli government, I had no formal obligation to this funding body and felt completely free in the process of conducting research and writing up. The funding not only ensured that I reached the level of Hebrew required to conduct fieldwork, but I also gained invaluable insights into the production of nationalist culture and knowledge. After a year of living in Haifa and travelling extensively throughout Israel, I moved to Kiryat Shemona in July 2008. Rarely did I encounter informants wanting to talk in English, besides a few younger ones who wanted to practice and improve their English. Having lived and studied Arabic in Damascus and Sana'a for ten months I have a basic knowledge of Arabic, but very few of my Arabic-speaking informants wanted to speak Arabic to me[4]. I made a conscious effort to ensure diversity (in terms of socio-economic background, gender, and age) and moved between different locations. I spent most of my time with two families and their wider networks, the Chakotay and the Zakay families. I also spent time with a few other families and had countless discussions with

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[4] The muting of the Arabic language will be analyzed in a chapter 5 about public stigmatization of Arabness.

a number of other residents.

I had prepared myself, academically and emotionally, for doing fieldwork in a politicised research setting and potentially 'under fire' (Norstrom and Robben 1995). How would I feel listening to opinions I did not agree with or handle a situation where it was assumed that I'd be sympathetic? As an anti-occupation, non-Israeli student, my political views were different from the majority of the residents in Kiryat Shemona, who were at times fiercely patriotic and openly anti-Palestinian. However, I was rarely asked to make my own political beliefs explicit and as such largely avoided situations where my informants might have been offended. I was bordering on an apolitical stance in the ulpan class, but at times that was very hard. During some of the more politicized conversations I was suspected of being a leftist (*smolanit*).

Living in a border town caused particular emotional stress during the Gaza war in 2008/2009 when Kiryat Shemona was the target of rocket attacks. While condemning the military for the attack on Gaza, I sympathized with and shared the residents' sense of fear. There were certain situations when I did not share the extent of my personal critical view of the political right-wing developments within Israeli society. Although I had to cope with feelings of self-censoring in certain contexts, in others I felt able to speak freely amongst Israeli friends with a variety of political opinions. Some of the people I met were eager to know whether I was going to write a 'nice' account of Kiryat Shemona, perhaps contrasting the largely negative picture that both scholarship and media have created of the town.

Various actors had interests in using me as a vehicle for carrying their message, particularly since I was conceived as an outsider. I could not promise anyone to write glowing accounts of life in Kiryat Shemona, which would have been deceitful. Combining close interpretations of my informants' narratives and practices with a critical approach has been important from a methodological point of view. Hopefully, I have managed to let the people I got to know stand in focus without reproducing their stereotypes and politically charged discourses. Hylland Eriksen reminds us "if the researcher fails to regard folk concepts of national and ethnic identify critically, analysts can easily become the hostages of nationalists wishing to justify violent and discriminatory practices" (Eriksen 1992:12). The analytical deconstruction of ethnicised and nationalist discourses is therefore essential.

The vast majority of those I interviewed or spent time with did not decline to be named, and for that I am grateful. The families I worked with expressed their

enthusiasm and support for my research and presence and asked to be inlcuded with their full names. When an informant shared a sensitive or potentially embarrising fact or story about themselves or others, I have either concealed the source or asked for permission to narrate the situation. I have assigned pseudonyms to a few informants who wanted to remain anonymous, or to those whom I only met for shorter interviews and thus were unable to develop their situational character and complexity. I have tried to write as accurately and sensitively as possible. Still, my interpretation may not correspond to my informants' and I might have analyzed their statements in ways that they might not find favorable. Except for my quotations of what they said, I hold the people who helped me in no way responsible for my analysis as presented in the dissertation, much less for any inaccuracies that it may contain.

My role as an outsider

"At Yehudia?" (are you Jewish?) I was asked on numerous occasions. As a Norwegian researcher with no ethnic connections or relatives in Israel, the answer was no. My answer was often followed with the question: *"aval, at ohevet et Israel?"* But do you love Israel? Many were curious to know whether I, as a non-Jew, empathized with Israel or was a Zionist. In no other place have I encountered the need to state and articulate one's national identity as clearly as in Israel. As a self-defined Jewish country in law and constitution, Israel is in reality a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. Still, the prevailing mono-ethnic ideology encourages all citizens to identity with and to create sentimental attachment to Jewish Israeliness. Not being Jewish in Israel is not unique, indeed a quarter of the population are not Jews according to the orthodox definition. However, the constant flow of questions I received concerning my own identification with Israel reflect the ongoing negotiation of what it means to be Israeli today. Do you have to express an allegiance to the Jewish nation-state to be accepted as a citizen or temporary resident? The many efforts being made to include me as an insider reflect the wider dilemma that arises from being a non-Jew in a Jewish state.

Some of my informants ascribed to me a symbolic insider status. *"At Betah Yehudiya" ("For sure, you're Jewish")* was a joking phrase I often heard. Revital, a woman I got to know very well, was convinced that there must be some Jewish blood in me since destiny had brought me to their town, and was overtly eager to include me amongst them. She was a well-known and successful matchmaker in Kiryat Shemona,

and she began considering marriage matches for me almost as soon as I got to know her. She was generally acknowledged as having a remarkable gift for the reading of people's futures in their coffee cups. Once she read my future, and her eyes shone as she excitedly mumbled her predictions: "I see a Jewish man!" Revital had counseled Jews to return to religion and Russian *goim* (non-Jews) to convert to Judaism and encouraged me to do the same. Although I clearly stressed that I had no intension to convert, she was a devoted instructor of religious customs and traditions. Having spend a couple of months attending sermons in synagogue on a regular basis, I found that Revital encouraged me to wear a skirt in stead of my regular jeans, cleary wanting to include me as a religious insider. Her husband Benny often introduced me jokingly to congregation members as "Israeli in the soul" *(Israelit baneshama).* It was perhaps all the attention I gave my informants that led them to hope that I eventually would become Jewish-Israeli and remain in Israel.

When I told an Ashkenazi colleague at the University of Haifa about my plan to do fieldwork amongst Mizrahim in Kiryat Shemoan, he promtly replied that he could not have done it. Israeli anthropology was largely institutionalised by Ashkenazim who gathered knowledge about the 'Orientals' through ethnographic documentation in the service of settler-colonialism. Their orientalising descriptions stressed the difference and exoticism of Mizrahi and Palestinian culture. Anthropology at Israeli universities continues to be dominated by Ashkenazim, and sixty-seven percent of Israeli anthropologists today study Mizrahim and/or Palestinians (Lavie 2005). My colleague thought that he would be met with justifiably suspicion if he was to do research in a Mizrahi predominantly working-class community as an Ashkenazi middle-class man.

The assumption that anthropology is the study of primitive people was a commonly-held view amongst the people I worked with, some of whom had been described as backwards and irrational by academics representing anthropology's early history in Israel. "Oh, so you think we are primitive!" my friend Keren laughed self-consciously when I first introduced myself as a student of anthropology. As time went by, I felt more comfortable with a clarification after I had used the term *antropologia,* saying that I was conducting research on the various historical and contemporary experiences relating to border town life in Kiryat Shemona. I acknowledge that my own biography, as a twenty-five year old, white female researcher from Northern Europe, middle-class and non-Jewish, perhaps influenced my informants' articulations and concerns. However, my outsider status might have gained me an enhanced level of trust

and possibly the people I met felt less restrained in their discussions.

Structure of dissertation

To understand the current character and dynamics of ethnicity, nationalism and place related to belonging it is important to know about the histories out of which they emerged. The first chapter examines the impact of the Zionist settler colonial project on Jews from Arab and Muslim lands. The Zionist ideology entailed from the beginning a Eurocentric bias that placed non-European Jews at the bottom of the ethnocracy. The chapter traces the destruction of the Palestinian village of al-Khalsa and its subsequent transformation into the Jewish town of Kiryat Shemona, constructed to ensure colonial control over peripheral minorities and territory. Chapter 2 is mainly about 'hot' instructive nationalism from above and elaborates on the differences between nationalism in the centre and periphery. Everyday flagging was present more in the border town while the ulpan was an explicit site of nationalist instruction from the centre. Nationalist myths and religious symbols were used to instil the idea of the nation as a sacred and transcendent object of worship for which people must sacrifice their lifes. The bounded discourses of nationhood generated both cohesion and fragmentation amongst its consumers. Chapter 3 moves from institutional nationalism to the level of everyday life in the border town of Kiryat Shemona. It analyzes the meanings and variable salience of the ethnicised category Mizrahi, examining the dynamics of ethno-racial stereotypes in everyday life and how these were used to negotiate status and class membership. The encounters and exchanges between members of the Zakay and Chackotay families demonstrate that the nation did not matter in numerous situations where class, religion and other categories of belonging were more relevant axes of identification. Chapter 4 explores how fear and suspicion are intrinsic characterisitcs of peripheral nationhood. I suggest that the local values of being 'strong' and 'steadfast' have emerged to counter the tension between Zionism's esteemed valuation of frontier settlements and their actual deprivation. During war, political actors and media moved the border towns from a stigmatized periphery to a central national frontier. When national sentiments intensified, social and ethno-class divisions were temporarily undermined. Chapter 5 explores the process of marking boundaries and categories of belonging and not-belonging from the perspective and daily experience of Mizrahim. Peripheral nationhood is reproduced routinely through

negotiations over Israeliness in relation to Russian and Arab others. The Euro-civilisational discourse stressing the relevance of a shared Western culture in relation to national identity profoundly shaped how residents identified themselves and others. An Oriental stigma was redeployed by Mizrahim towards Jewish and non-Jewish Russians and Druze and Arab others. Religion became a peculiar resource for Mizrahim, even the secular, for claims to Jewish Israeliness. Chapter 6 addresses associations and imaginings trancending the nation-state. While maintaining material and symbolic links to Arab otherlands, Mizrahim strived to fashion themselves as western and cosmopolitan oriented. To imagine their lives in an Arab past or American future became a way to cope with disillusionment over life in Israel and borderland anxieties. The final chapter revisits the main themes, particularly in regard to theories of everyday nationalism.

Localities and regions mentioned in the dissertation.

Figure 1. Map of Israel.[5]

Chapter 1

Zionist settler colonialism and its impact on Jews from Arab and Muslim lands

This chapter examines the ideolgocial roots of the Israeli ethnocracy and its impact on the position and identity of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands.[6] Zionism, as a settler colonial project, claimed its 'historical' right to colonise Palestinian land with the goal of constructing a Jewish nation-state. Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, classified as Mizrahim, were the victims of exclusionary processes of racialisation and had to adapt to Eurocentric nationhood as defined by the Ashkenazi elite. During the 1950s, colonial practices of securing territorial control consolidated the ethnocracy as Mizrahi immigrants were disproportionally placed in peripheral frontier areas on the geographic and socio-economic margins of Israeli society. They served as a cheap labour force for Ashkenazi-dominated settlements which were an intrinsic part of creating a Jewish frontier against Palestinian Arabs who were located outside the confines of the Zionist project. Colonial settler practices and policies turned the Mizrahim into an in-between peripheral minority and ethno-class, caught between inclusion and exclusion, submission and defiance.

Zionism's ideological motivation for a national home in Palestine

The Zionist movement arose in central and eastern Europe in the late 1880s as a response to excessive persecution and antisemitism in Europe. When Theodor Herzl, one of the founders of political Zionism, wrote *"The Jewish State: an attempt at a modern solution to the Jewish problem"* in 1896, he was only one of a long line of Jewish intellectuals advocating a political answer to the problems facing European Jews. The goal of Jewish unity and the desire for a secular Jewish nation-state was the founding principle for political Zionism. Herzl argued that: "A return to national existence in a nation-state like all other nations would help to terminate the long and

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[6] Ethnocracy' is a specific expression of nationalism, which exists in contested territories, where a dominant 'ethnos' gains political control and uses the state apparatus to 'ethnicise' the territory and society in question (Yiftachel 2006:11).

dark period of Jewish exile in Gentile lands" (Herzl [1896] 1988:85). Herzl himself was more ambivalent about where the future State should be but after his death in 1904, most of the leaders of the Zionist movement associated the national revival with the colonisation of Palestine and claimed biblical territory as the cradle for their new nationalist movement (Pappe 2006:10).[7]

Benedict Anderson argues that in order to properly understand why nationalism commands profound emotional legitimacy, it has to be understood as not just aligned with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it (Anderson 1983:12). He argues that "nations combine elements of faith and ethnic communities to produce a new synthesis, which draws much of its strength and inspiration, as well as many of its forms, from older religious beliefs, moral sentiments and sacred rites" (ibid:23). Sacred belief remained central to the Zionist movement's claims to territories. The social and political project of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the settlement and colonisation of the land, and the construction of a Jewish community and state there, all against Arab opposition and hostility, were rendered culturally in terms of national revival, territorial repatriation and historical redemption (Ram in Olick 2003:228). In the urgent need to establish a common origin for the Jewish people, the Zionist movement used the foundation myth from the Old Testament presenting the Jew as the eternal exile (Sand 2009:255). This focus, adopting a biblical conception of time, suggests that the meaning of the Jewish people is intimately bound up with the working out of Jewish history (Handelman 1998:224). In Zionist ideology, the return to a historical homeland was a reward of ethnic selection, God giving a specific homeland to his 'Chosen Peoples' (Smith 2003:92).

The notion of *aliya*, as physical and moral ascent to the land of Israel, epitomised by the story of Exodus, inspired the movement.[8] Jewish immigration to the sacred land was represented as a return to the Jewish birthplace totally disconnected from the movements of European immigration to other countries (Kimmerling 2008:231). Modern, political Zionism strategically distanced itself from the global colonial context of the time, and rather emphasised the uniqueness of the Jewish problem. Antisemitism, persecutions, and later, the Holocaust, provided the background

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[8] The term *aliya,* literally meaning ascent, was borrowed from traditional Judaism and has been used ever since the first wave of immigrants arrived in Palestine. The term has synagogue connotations as readig the weekly Torah portion on Saturdays is also called aliya.

that made nation-building in Israel the only realistic and moral solution (Kimmerling 2010:231).

Although the Zionist movement distanced itself from the colonial context at the time, it still shared several characteristics with settler projects in Canada, the USA, Australia and Latin and South America and later South Africa and Algeria. However, there were differences between these colonial projects in terms of the nature of the world economic order and whether settlers continue to have relations or not to a political metropolitan power. Unlike other settler movements, the Zionist movement did not have a formal 'mother nation' outside the colonised land. The Jewish National Fund, based in the United States, played a quite different role to a motherland or imperial power. Its role was to ensure support for the settlers as nation builders, but not to rule through them. Still, the Zionist movement clearly attached itself to the dominant imperial powers of the day, Great Britain and the United States, and followed their colonial exploitation and displacement practices.[9] European imperial powers colonized land while seeking to remove or subjugate the indigenous inhabitants (Masalha 2007:16). The British imperial powers imported indentured workers to their colonies from countries whose populations were considered to be racially and culturally inferior, such as Malays and Indians who were brought to South-Africa to work the lush tropical farms of the Cape as well as areas in KwaZulu-Natal (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995:5, Susser 2011:5).[10] The advancement of the ethnically dominant groups was predicated upon forms of subordination imposed on the assumed inferior and backward indigenous minorities (Veracini 2010:5, Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995:16).

In the late nineteenth century, the first aliyah, or wave of pioneering settlers, mostly Jews of Polish and Russian birth, emigrated to Palestine and formed the *yishuv,* the Jewish settlement in the land of Israel (*Hayishuv Hayehudi b'Eretz Yisrael).* Central to the emergence of a modern Jewish secular national consciousness was the revival of Hebrew which served as a "central symbol for the awakening and maintenance of national sentiments" (Spolsky 1991:72). In the 1880's, Hebrew was revitalised and modernised by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and within a short period (approximately 1890-1916), it became the official spoken language among Jewish settlers in Palestine (ibid).

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[9] The state of Israel continues to get political, economic and ideological support from the United States. The often automatic and uncritical support for Israeli military actions and occupation of Palestinian/Arab land, can be seen as an outcome of a settler consciousness appeased by 'frontier' images of pioneering enterprise (Veracini 2006:88).

[10] The exception was Australia, where convict labor from Britain was used as a mean of achieving their 'moral regeneration' (Veracini 2012:82).

The existing pre-Zionist Jewish settlements were at this time predominantly located in the four towns considered sacred in Judaism: Hebron, Tiberias, Safed and Jerusalem. The early Zionist settlers were less interested in the ultra-traditional Jerusalem, and directed their resources toward buying up plots of land. A majority of settlers who moved to Palestine shared an orientalist vision of biblical times and proclaimed indigenous status for the Jews in Palestine as the 'Land of Israel'where their ancient forefathers had lived (Tal 2002:20). Their ideology is well illustrated in the following passage from their revolutionary programme:

> The terrible position of the Jewish nation will not be improved unless we emigrate, alter our way of life, and engage in productive work. Every nation lives on a land of its own; the majority of its members are farmers living by the toil of their hands, the rest being engaged in other branches of work that have visible results and are of real value. The Jewish people have become a people of 'the spirit', logicians, merchants and middlemen; and for this reason it has become physically impoverished…Let us therefore summon our strength and start out. Let us return to our ancient Mother, to the country which awaits us full of compassion, to nourish us with the best of her fruit. Let us abandon the scale and measure and take up the plough and sickle (I.L, Pinkser, quoted in D.B Gurion, Jewish Labour, quoted in Weingrod 1966).

The Zionist programme presented socialism and pioneering as the primary ideals for the movement. They turned their backs on the Jewish Diaspora *(galut)* as a place of unproductive deformity and weakness resulting from an age-long enforced homelessness. Only immigration to *Eretz Israel* would solve the "terrible position of the Jewish nation" by placing it in "a land of its own". Early immigrants viewed themselves as vanguards of a future, much larger immigration for which they were to "pave the road for the return of the masses of Jews to their land" (ibid:17).

There were five major *aliyot* (plural of aliyah) during Ottoman times and the British Mandate. The second aliyah (1904-1914) was sparked by a fresh wave of persecution of Jews in Russia. An estimated 40,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine during this time and agricultural settlements took off. In contrast to other settler societies who relied on an indigenous work force, the *Histradut*[11] (General Federation of Workers in

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[11] The Histadrut (whose leadership substantially overlapped with the labour political party Mapai) ruled the main elements of the Zionist project: colonisation, economic production and marketing, the labour force and defense (Hanieh 2003:6).

Eretz Israel) tried to prevent dependence on Palestinian labour. Through the 'conquest of labour' and the principle of Jewish labour (*avodah Ivrit*) in the 1920s, Jewish settlers campaigned for the non-employment of Palestinians (Shimon 2004).[12] The racist exclusionist policies were articulated in the constitution of the Jewish National Fund: land provided to a settler was to be worked "by himself or with the aid of his family…, if and whenever he may be obliged to hire help, he will hire Jewish workmen only" (Stasiulius & Yuval-Davis 1995:292).

Many Zionists envisaged a new 'covenant' not between humanity and God, but between human being and nature. The commitment to pioneering labour was conceived as integral to the redemption of the Jewish people in its historic homeland (Smith 2000:48). The pioneer was going to be both a worker and military defender.

Zionism redefined gender in relation to the perception of national regeneration. The figure of the mythic *Sabra* epitomized the ideal of the New Jew who was strong, muscular and masculine, in contrast to the physically soft and weak feminine qualities of the Diaspora Jew.[13] Women were for a long time a minority among the Zionist settlers, but held crucial roles in carrying out the necessary domestic tasks, by bearing and rearing the New Jew and by acting as honorary men, working in the productive labour and military aspects of the settlement projects (Stasiulius and Yuval-Davis 1995:312). Zionist *shelihim* (emissaries) toured the Jewish communities abroad to raise money and to "gain soul" for the movement, especially young people who could be *halutizm* (pioneers) on the land. These efforts were mostly directed at European Jewry, but there was also active immigrant recruitment from Yemenite Jewry, that satisfied the need for Jewish "working and fighting hands" (ibid:122).

In 1911 the Israeli Bureau appointed Shemuel Yavnieli to a mission to Yemen to encourage the Jews there to emigrate to Palestine. His efforts of persuasion about the

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[12] According to Shafir, during the first and second Aliyahs (1882-1903 and 1904-14), six different models were elaborated vis-avis the Palestinians presence and in relation to the question of whether the developing colonial economy should rely on Palestinian labour. It was only after the 'conquest of labour', that Zionism turned into an exclusivist colonial settler movement. 75 per cent of the total South African labour force was indigenous, compared to only 15 per cent of the Jewish sector of the Israeli economy between 1948 and 1967 (Shafir in Veracini 2006:21). The expulsion of Palestinians during the Nakba and current calls within Israel for "transfer" also illustrates how Jewish labour still is preferred to Palestinian.

[13] The word is derived from the word *tzabar,* the name of a cactus. The allusion is to a tenacious, thorny desert plant with a thick surface that conceals a sweet, soften interior, i.e., tough on the outside and sweet and tender on the inside. It's a plant that is not indigenous to Palestine, but was originally brought from Latin America. Thus, it is quite ironic that both Palestinians and Israelis claim the sabra as symbol of indigeneity.

importance of Jewish labour were not met initially with great enthusiasm. Only after continuing his efforts using messianic terminology of 'redemption' did his recruitment plan succeed.

> I announce to you that redemption is close, the redemption of the souls of our people which are awakening to immigrate to Israel to recover it through manual labour…Any part of the land of our country which Hebrew hands cultivate is being redeemed (Yavnieli quoted in Klorman-Eraqi 1981).

The sacred promise of the Land of Israel combined with the reward of ethnic selection served as a powerful symbolic bridge to connect Jews with their national identity (Zerubavel 2005:132). Already, at this early stage of nation building, the ethnocracy was in the making. Ashkenazi pioneers shared the *mission civilisatrice* doctrine of European colonial powers and treated the Yemeni workers brought to Palestine as 'uncivilised' Jews from an inferior culture. Many of the Yemenite reluctant pioneers became utterly disillusioned with the hard labour and treatment they had received and decided to return to Yemen in the 1920s. More Jewish immigration would come soon from somewhere else.

British rule in Palestine was confirmed by the Mandate issued by the League of Nations in 1920, whose text incorporated the words of the Balfour declaration dated 2nd November 1917, supporting Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine and the creation of Jewish homeland. In the prevailing orientalist Eurocentric ideology, the devastating impact of such a solution to the 'Jewish problem' on the Palestinians remained largely invisible. Until the early 1920s, settlement in Palestine was largely under the control of private European Jewish capitalists (especially Baron Rothschild). After that, control passed to the Jewish agency, and Keren Kayemet (The Jewish National Fund of the World Zionist Organization). Between 1920 and the mid-1930s, the Zionist movement received full support from the British colonial government in Palestine which played a key role in the materializations of the settler project. The one-way transfer of lands from Palestinian to Zionist settlers was secured through legal and illegal coercive measures like taxation, imprisonment and collective punishment (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995:292).

Antisemitism was at its most extreme in Germany under the National Socialist regime during the 1930s and 1940s, and Jewish immigration to Palestine increased

significantly. British authorities had heavy restrictions on immigration, and the majority of Jewish refugees were not permitted to enter Palestine legally. As the urgency for Jews to leave Europe intensified, more refugees managed to enter, referred to by the British as illegal immigrants. The German Zionist organisation collaborated with Nazi-Germany to ensure German Jewish migration to Palestine. An economic agreement named *Haavara,* signed in November 1933, allowed for the transfer of German assets to Palestine. Nazi Germany got rid of Jewish citizens they considered racially inferior while the Zionist movement gained new settlers for the colonialisation of Palestine.[14] By 1936, the Jewish population had reached almost 400, 000 (Gartner 2001:196). In 1947, the last year of British rule, the Jewish population was approximately 600,000, counting for 30.6 percent of the total population (Bernstein 2000:21).

Two national narratives: independence and catastrophe

Referring to the establishment of Israel in 1948 as the War of Independence by Jewish Israelis or *Nakba* (catastrophe) by Palestinians, reflects two competing national narratives. Kiryat Shemona, like other Jewish towns and cities, was built on the ruins of a village in which Palestinians once lived. The making of a national identity is not only an act of memory, but also an act of forgetting (Shenhav 2006:138). In Kiryat Shemona, the official Israeli-Jewish version of history was dominant. Few of my informants referred to the history of their town pre-Israeli statehood. Eitan Bronstein, the director of Zokhrot, an Israeli NGO that aims to raise awareness of the Palestinian Nakba, was the only Israeli I met (who was not from Kiryat Shemona) who knew its former name-al-Khalsa. Eitan, himself an Ashkenazi Jew, started the organisation in 2000. It was dedicated to teaching about the Nakba to Israelis as a means to create reconciliation in the future. Together with volunteers he has erected signs in Hebrew and in Arabic to indicate the places that were destroyed in 1948. When I met him in August 2008, he

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[14] The transfer agreement forced German Jews to give up the majority of their assets to Germany before emigrating. Parts of these assets could be obtained later by transferring them to Palestine as German export goods. The Zionist movement broke the boycott against Germany that had been initiated by several, mostly American, Jewish organizations. The transfer agreement meant that German Jews who emigrated were able to meet the minimum financial requirement for immigration established by the British Mandate Authorities. German Jews were able to use the system until December 1939 when it ended. Some 50,000 people were assisted by the agreement. The majority of German Jews were no convinced that immigration to Palestine was the answer to anti-Semitism. Had German Jewish emigrants not been allowed to transfer their capital, they might not have come to Palestine (Segev 1991:22).

said that there was a great ignorance and suppressed knowledge about the Nakba among Israeli Jews.

> My experience is that the general Israeli population and government continue to live in denial with regard to a central piece of history of the early days of the Israeli state. People might know that they live in a town once inhabited by Palestinians, but they don't know about their life or why they left the place and where they are today and what they want for the future.

Settler colonial practices and imaginations reveal a shared mythology of the colonised space as empty land. In his book *Chosen Peoples* (2003), Smith compares Zionism with Afrikaner nationalism. Both have insisted on indigenous absence, on a 'land without a people', or the emptiness of the South African frontier, arguing that the indigenous peoples had entered the colonised geographic space at a late historical stage, and thus have no valid claims to sacred rootedness in the land.[15] Both Palestinian and black South Africans were denied their ethno-national specificity, and categorised as local segments of a wider, more undifferentiated indigenous context (Veracini 2010:19).

In Israel, in the last three decades, the so-called 'new historians' and critical post-Zionist critical sociologists have challenged the truths of conventional Zionist historiography and the founding myths which surrounded the establishment of the State of Israel.[16] Pappe[17] (2006) and Morris (2004) both promote alternative Israeli collective memory by including Israel's role in the ethnic cleansing and expulsion of Palestinians in 1948, a recent, but muted past of living memory.[18] Jewish immigrants, many with traumatic experiences of death and displacement, did not arrive to an 'empty landscape

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[15] Afrikaner nationalism claimed that Black South Africans had entered the settler space after the Boer treks of the 1830s and Zionism represented Palestinians as non-indigenous to Palestine (Veracini 2010:26). The term a 'land without a people for a people without land was first uttered in 1901 by Israel Zangwill, a contemporary of Herzl (Stasiulius & Nira Yuval-Davis 1996:291).

[16] Starting in the 1980s, post-Zionism is according to Uri Ram a scholarly trend of libertarianism and strives to lower the boundaries of Israeli identity and to include in it all relevant "others". Many Post-Zionists advocate the evolution of Israel into a non-ideological, secular, liberal democracy in a state which is officially neither Jewish nor Arab in character (Ram 2003).

[17] The space for critical scholarship is narrow in ethnocratic nationalistic societies and has created difficulties for scholars who critique Zionism. Ilan Pappe was boycotted by his former employer, the University of Haifa and found it increasingly difficult to live in Israeli with his critical views on Zionism and moved to England.

[18] Today, the subject that Palestinians were expelled is hardly disputed amongst scholars, though issues of circumstances and the issue of return are still very much a topic of disagreement and debate (e.g. Kadish 1989).

in need of cultivation', as was told by Zionist emissaries and leaders, but to a place where Arabs lived and laboured, and from which they were violently expelled.[19]

The history of al-Khalsa has received little attention in Israeli historiography. Although sources on this topic are meagre, they are sufficient to print a picture of the town both before its destruction and the process of the actual demolition. Benvenisti and Kaufman-Lacusta's book "*Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*" and Walid Khalidi's "*All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*" are useful for this purpose.

After the British withdrawal, the Israeli legislative body (*Knesset*) acted as if it was the successor to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) by adopting the latter's method of 'redeeming' the land (Benvenisti 2002: 146). Before 1948, Jewish landowners could not violate the right of the Palestinian tenants to remain on their land. With statehood, the ethos of pioneering (*haluziyut*) was transformed into that of statism (*mamlachtiut)*. Jewish settlers no longer purchased land, but expropriated and expelled villagers from their homes. Implementing the military doctrine Plan D (*Tokhnit Dalet)* launched by Major General Yigael Yadin on 10 March 1948, Jewish military forces conquered about 20,000 square kilometers of territory, far beyond the 14,000 square kilometers granted them by the UN Partition resolution of 29 November 29, 1947 (Kimmerling 2008:158). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their lands and property. The process included the expulsion of some 800,000 Palestinians, the destruction of more than 531 villages, and expulsion of eleven urban neighbourhoods and their inhabitants (preface to Pappe 2006). The Jewish state's territories were enlarged far beyond the borders allocated to it by the United Nations resolution of 29 November 1947. Only one hundred thousand Palestinians remained in areas allocated to Israel and additional areas occupied by Israel from the designated Arab states. The Palestinians who remained within Israel were reduced to a low-ranked minority without legal right to hold Jewish land or property or to serve in the army. They were not allowed to organise themselves into political parties or to campaign on a Palestinian political platform (Said & Hitchens 1988:247). Palestinians were subject to martial law until 1966. Confined to their

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[19] The Zionist myth of the desertification of Palestine under Arab and Turkish rule and their mission to make the desert bloom was a shared trope of other European colonial movements. The French colonialists claimed that ancient Algeria had been the breadbasket of Rome, but under Berber rule had become barren and malarial (Penslar 2007:95).

villages, they needed special permits from local military commanders to leave them, whether to seek employment or to visit relatives (Gelvin 2005: 135).

The village of al-Khalsa, located on a low hill on the north-western edge of the al-Hula plain, was originally founded by Bedouin from the Jordan Valley. During the Ottoman Empire, in 1596, it had a population of 160 and was administrated by the *nahiya* (sub-district) of Jira, part of Sanjak Safad. The population in the water-rich Hula valley at this time was predominantly Bedouin and subsistence farmers who lived in some twenty small villages, tent encampments and huts constructed of reeds and mud structures. The villagers grew field crops and vegetables, orchards of fruit trees and raised water buffalo. The houses in al-Khalsa were made of bricks and basalt stones cut from the hillside. In 1916, Temimi and al-Katib described how they were generously welcomed by the head of the tribe in a large guesthouse with rug-covered floors (Khalidi 1992:463). These descriptions show that the Palestine that Jewish settlers found before the Mandate period was not under-cultivated and barren as presented by Zionist leaders and later mythology. Although the Palestinian population was predominantely *fellaheen* (peasants), with a significant nomad Bedouin population, it also consisted of a large urban population that was engaged in both international trade and export of agricultural products like oranges and olive oil (Stasiulius & Yuval-Davis 1995:292).

Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, the allies divided the remains of the empire between them in what would be the basis of the finalisation of the northern border into the present day. The *Sykes-Piko Agreement* was signed in 1916, two years before the final defeat of the Ottoman Empire. The agreement stated that the dividing line between the French and English Mandate would be the line that connects the point from north of Acre with the point of the western beach of the Sea of Galilee (today Kibbutz Ginosar). Four Jewish settlements, Metula in the North and Kfar Giladi, Tel-Hai and Hamra to the South, existed in the area at that time. The French and English left the northern area with no real control between the years of 1919-1921 due to confusion surrounding their secret border agreements.

At this time Palestinians were struggling for their national independence and were resentful of Zionist settlements (Stasiulius & Yuval-Davis 1995:293). In 1920, the leader of the al-Ghawarina clan, Sheikh Kamal Hussein, led an attack on the Jewish settlement of Tel-Hai as an Arab protest against the French Mandate. Joseph Trumpeldor and seven others were killed, an event that became a central myth of Jewish

steadfastness and heroic sacrifice. Although Sheik Hussein established closer relationships with the Jewish settlers in the years preceding 1948, the settlers of the Kfar Giladi (today's Kibbutz Kfar Giladi) did not forget or forgive, and instead established relations with Hussein's rival, Emir Faour, leader of the al-Fadel tribe, whose members lived in the Golan heights and the eastern part of the Hula Valley (Benvenisti 2000:128).

The borders between the British and French Mandate passed north of the village and the line which cuts the Hula Valley from its central base at Marjeyon, made al-Khalsa an important crossroad in the region. The village served as a centre of commerce for the Bedouins, the mountain settlers, and villagers across the border. The weekly Thursday market, *Suk el-Khamis*, drew people from villages in the Naphtali mountains, the Alawi villages, Druze from the Golan Heights and South Lebanon Christian and Muslim Arabs. Most of the villages in Galilee were small, with populations not exceeding 500 individuals. Al-Khalsa was the largest village, and according to a village survey from 1945, its population numbered 1,840, out of whom 20 were Christians. The village had a boys' elementary school, which also admitted students from neighbouring villages, and a council that administered its affairs (Khalidi 1992:463).

In 1934 the Jews received the concession to a large piece of swampy Hula land (54,000 dunams) from the Mandatory government, on the condition that they drained it. The following year the land was purchased by the Jewish National Fund and in 1939 the *Osheskin Fort settlements* of Dan, Dafna and Shaar Hayeshuv were established. A map of the region in 1947 shows that most of the area north and west of the Hula was under Jewish ownership, and there were only nineteen Arab villages where Jews did not have a foothold. In the 1948 War, there was a total of eighteen Jewish settlements in northern and southern Hula, the first of which had been established in 1882 and the last in 1945 (Benvenisti 2000:128).

The destruction of al-Khalsa

The cleansing of indigenous populations is another shared feature of settler colonial projects (Veracini 2010:33). The leaders of al-Khalsa attempted to strike an agreement with the Hagana to save the village from attack, but it was rejected.[20] On 12th May 1948, the Israeli army, the Palmach's first battalion, conquered the police station in al-Khalsa as a part of the *Plan Dalet* and *Operation Yiftach*. The commander of Operation Yiftach, Palmach chief Yigal Allon, intended to expel as much of the area's population as possible during the offensive and later wrote: "We regarded it as imperative to cleanse the interior of the Galilee and create Jewish territorial continuity in the whole of the Upper Galilee" (Allon quoted in Khalidi 1992:455). Al-Khalsa's population of approximately 2,100 inhabitants fled as a result of the massive destruction. According to Israeli historian Benny Morris (2004:123) the villagers felt threatened and fled, while eyewitness accounts state the cause of their flight was Safad's fall to Israel on that same day. Villagers interviewed by the Palestinian historian Nafez Nazzal stated:

> Upon the fall of Safad the villagers fled from their houses to the village of Hunin. About one hundred men remained in the village (and one of them recounted): The morning Safad fell we met members of the Arab liberation army retreating towards the mountains. They suggested that we take our families across to Lebanon for a week or two…They assured us that they were regrouping to recapture Safad (Nazzal quoted in Benvenisti 2002: 130).

The village's residents stated that after they fled, only the local militia remained, but withdrew after shelling from the Jewish settlement of Manara and an armoured unit approached the town (Morris 2004:120). The militiamen retreated through the hills and made their way to Hunin, and probably moved on to Lebanon a few days later, along with the people of Hunin itself (Khalidi 1992:463). The Jewish forces blew up the stone or concrete houses in the abandoned villages and burned the reed huts (Benvenisti 2002:130). Al-Khalsa was completely destroyed with the exception of the village school, the British Mandate government's office, the village mosque and the police station. One of the militiamen returned after a few days to retrieve money that he had

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[20] The *Hagana* was a Zionist underground paramilitary organization during the British Mandate in Palestine.

buried in the courtyard of his house, and he found that the Israeli forces had burned and destroyed most of the houses. Former villagers interviewed in Tell al-Zaatar (the hill of thyme) refugee camp in Lebanon in 1972 recounted that when they later returned to the village;

> We found that the Jews had burned and destroyed the houses belonging to Ali Zakayan, Abu Ali Muhammad Hamadih, Mustafa al-Haj Yusif, Issa Muhammad, Ali Salih Ahmad, Muhammad Arab al-Haj Mahmud, Salih Ismail, Sari al-Khadir, Dawud Hussein, Abdul-Raziq Hamid, Qassim Muhammead al-Salih and Ali Hussein Mahmud....The village was in ruins (Nazzal 1978:47).[21]

Palestinians remained in only three villages in the Hula Valley: Khisas, Qaytiyaa, and Ja'una. In June 1949 they were expelled to Akbara, near Safad. Only one Bedouin settlement, now called Touba-Zangahariyya, which had allied itself with Jewish forces, remained intact in the Hula Valley. By the end of May the Jewish settlements in the Galilee had begun to harvest the Arab fields of their winter crops (Nazzal 1978:131).[22]

The Ingathering of the Exiles

> The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

> - The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel May 14 1948.

> Here everybody is both Jewish and universal: in the soil…the trees…the roads…the houses…the factories…the ships…the air…the schools…the army…the planes…the language…the landscape…the vegetation…all of it is Jewish.

> David Ben-Gurion (quoted in Handelman 2004:43).

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[21] I repeat these witness stories and their careful naming out of respect for the Palestinian commemoration of Nakba and their claim to return and demand for compensation.

[22] In the Hula Valley alone, this land encompassed an area of 15,000 dunams (Nazzal 1978:131).

The new state of Israel depended on Jewish immigration. During a briefing at the Lausanne conference in 1949 Ben-Gurion[23] made it clear that immigration was the main political goal that would bring about the redemption referred to as "a model people and a model state" (quoted in Segev 1986: 96). He believed that only in a Jewish state "where everything is in our hands, from the land and the army to the university and the radio", was a full and complete Jewish life possible (Ben-Gurion in letter to Simon Rawidowich 24th November 1954, in Ravid 1998:197). Ben-Gurion, called *The Law of Return* "the foundation stone of the State of Israel," as it granted Jewish immigrants citizenship upon arrival. The 'ingathering of the exiles' represented a secular Zionist ambition (drawing rhetoric and images from biblical notions found in the prophets) to construct a national, modern and homogenous identity that would result in one unified nation (Zsfadia 1997:66).

With statehood, tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors and displaced persons immigrated to Israel.[24] Of the nine million Jews who had resided in Europe, two thirds were murdered by Nazi- Germany. Efforts to reach the Jews of Arab countries and organise them for immigration were intensified as the dimension of Holocaust became known. Before the genocide of European Jews, the Zionist movement, whose members were for the most part of eastern European origin, had taken little interest in the Jews of North Africa and Arab countries. "We were used to think of the Oriental Jews mostly as subjects for historical and anthropological research," one leader said (Segev 2000:121). The state embarked on a massive immigration program aimed at bringing Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (Mizrahi Jews) to settle in the new state. Overall 900, 000 Jews left Arab and Muslim countries after 1948, of which 600,000 went to Israel. Of those 600,000, almost half arrived during the three first years of Israeli statehood. Two hundred and sixty-six thousand came from Morocco, twice as many as the next largest contingent, who came from Iraq (The Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel 2002, Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006:57). The disintegration of the Jewish populations in Arab lands was almost total.

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[23] Israel's first prime minister, David-Ben Gurion (1886-1973), held the position of prime minister twice, from 1948–53 and then again from 1955–63 (Karesh & Hurvitz 2006:51).

[24] First to arrive were those who had been held in the Cyprus refugee camps, approximately 52,000. Throughout World War II, Jews tried by all methods to reach the shores of Palestine. The British, viewing this as illegal, intercepted most immigrant ships and dispatched their passengers to Cyprus. Some ships like the "Patria" and the"Strauma" sank at sea. Approximately 300,000 immigrants arrived from the Eastern block until their Communist regimes forbad emigration. Bulgaria, one of few European states from which mass deportation of Jews was not carried out, provided 40,000 immigrants.

The extent of historic anti-Jewish feeling and persecution in Arab and Islamic countries is a matter of scholarly controversy and debate. However, compared to the ideological antisemitism and state-sponsored extermination of European Jewry, it is hard to discredit the view that until the Jewish-Arab conflict developed during the British Mandate, Jews lived in relative peace with their Muslim neighbours, especially in the more cosmopolitan corners of the Ottoman empire (Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006:58). The Jews of *Dar al-Islam*[25] had lived among Arabs as protected people *(dhimmis)* for centuries, and although their relationship was not harmonious all the time, they managed to coexist, interact and benefit from one another (Stillman 1991:242).[26] The Jews of Arab countries had been scarcely affected by the Holocaust. Even the German occupation of Tunisia seems to have had a limited effect on the treatment of the Jewish population there (Weingrod in Lehmann & Siebzehner 2007:66).

While there was a concern about the physical safety of Jewish communities in the Arab world, particularly after the 1941 pogrom in Baghdad, they were mainly considered as subsidiary to the population lost in Europe (Shiblak 2005:133). Discussions of Jewish communal disruption and trauma often overlook the fact that for Jews from Arab and Muslim lands the disruption resulted from the establishment of the Israeli state and not from the Holocaust (Kantrowitz 2007:94). Mizrahi residents I interviewed in Kiryat Shemona, for the most part, gave descriptions of harmonious Jewish life before emigration, although some did recall fear and breakdown of trust between neighbours after the establishment of Israel.

Except for the descendants of the pre-Zionist old yishuv and several thousand Yemenis who were brought to Mandate Palestine by Zionist authorities as cheap labour, only a small minority participated actively in the Zionist project before 1948 (Shafir & Peled 2002:242). The vast majority of Jews from Arab countries had no connection with Zionism prior to immigration, but they had lived with the sacred concept of exile in traditional Judaism throughout generations (Boyarins 1993).

Israeli governmental institutions, such as the Aliyah Department and Jewish Agency appropriated these sacred beliefs and rhetoric and ran public propaganda campaigns persuading Jews to emigrate. Zionist recruiters actively spread myths about

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[25] The term is used for lands where Islam became the predominant religion, literally the abode of Islam.
[26] As *dhimmis*; protected people, the Jews had to follow certain rules and regulations and generally they were seen as second-class citizens. They were also referred to as *Ahl al-kitab* (Arabic): People of the book.

life in Israel (Laskier 1994:296). In Morocco, letters were circulated to local rabbis, who during Shabbat services, read to their congregations glowing accounts of life in *Eretz Yisrael* (Weingrod 1966:34). In Iraq, the emissaries spread the same Zionist thesis: that Jewish life in the Diaspora was poisonous and impossible and that the only salvation was to become pioneers on the land in the collective of Eretz Israel. This messianic inpired doctrine seemed foreign to those Arab Jews who had not experienced any crises of identity (Benjamin 2006:134).

Undoubtedly there is no unified Jewish experience of life in the Arab world. Deciding to emigrate from one of the Arab countries was based on the particular circumstances and was dependent on timing, the country, the community and the person and often combined push and pull factors (Segev 1998:161). Some immigrants were attracted by life in a Jewish state by messianic expectations of redemption, some encouraged by the prospects of a better economic situation. Others simply followed their family and friends and were afraid of being left on their own when the rest had departed (Segev 1998:114). Wealthier families from Morocco went on pre-visit tours to Israel to observe life before deciding on migration. Large numbers of Moroccan Jews preferred to delay their departure from Morocco due to the discouraging descriptions of life in Israel (Hakohen 2003:237).

Happiness over the creation of Israel did not necessarily translate into a wish to live there. The metaphysics of Becoming implied in aliyah: exile, return, redemption, ignores moments of refusal or of ambivalence towards being uprooted (Handelman 2004:135). Aliyah created images of a joyful return to one's beloved homeland, when the reality was that many Mizrahi immigrants experienced social and material descent (*yerida*) rather than ascent with the act of leaving their countries (Shoat 2001). It was largely to a land of myths the immigrants set out (Weingrod 1972:35).

In contrast to conventional forms of colonialism, settler colonialism is premised on the domination of a majority that has become indigenous. As such, Israel resembles other settler states such as the United States and Australia where the immigrant minority settlers have become the majority through coercive colonial practices. Zionist settler colonialism created differentiated and unequal citizenship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians and between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. Jews from Arab and Muslim countries with a variety of backgrounds and life histories were categorised as Sephardim and later Mizrahim in contrast to the Yiddish-speaking Jews whose

Ashkenazi identity preceded Zionism.[27] The category Mizrahi (Eastern) was originally constructed and used as a hegemonic tool by Ashkenazim to Westernized Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, while simultaneously used to highlight their innate social moral inferiority (Chetrit 2004, Shoat 1988). The Zionist movement also had far-reaching effects upon the identity of Palestinians who were divided into Druze, Bedouin, Christian and Muslim Arabs. All Jewish immigrants had to adjust to a single system of values, norms and sensibilities in order to escape from their "exile mentality" and become a "person like all other persons" liberated from the defects acquired in the Diaspora (Massad 1996:54).

The policy of population dispersal

From the beginning of Jewish settlement in Palestine in the late nineteenth century, the Galilee was considered a frontier by the Zionist leadership. After the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian population, one of the urgent and most important goals was to establish a Jewish presence. The Israeli government and military constructed two main regions as the country's internal frontiers: the Negev in the south and the Galilee in the north. In mid-1949, the government's 'physical planning division' prepared a nationwide plan for the dispersal of the country's population. The goal was to Judaize areas heavily populated by Palestinians in order to increase the size of the Jewish population and meet the official demand for defensible borders (Yiftachel 2001:23).

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) became a central institution and symbol in the newly established state.[28] The military was regarded as the major institutional tool for the absorption of immigrants and the major equaliser of ethnic differences (Weiss 2002:44). The chief of staff Yigael Yadin issued a public statement in 1950 about the importance of the IDF's aid and presence in peripheral transit camps (ma'abarot):

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[27] The original definition of Sephardim is of those whose mother tongue is/was Ladino (Judeo- Español) and whose religious practice and diaspora path can be traced at some point through the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal). After a *Golden Age* of relative peaceful coexistence with Muslim and Christians, they were forced to convert, were killed or expelled (the majority settled in Northern-Africa) during the Spanish Inquisition in 1478. Today, Spanish Sephardim sometimes resent the blurring of distinctions between themselves and Mizrahim, refferring with pride to their history and with Eurocentric bias against non-Europeans, referring to themselves as "true or "pure" Sephardim (Kaye/Kantrowitz 2007:82).

[28] Ben-Gurion saw the IDF as the expression of the normalization of the Jewish people. The IDF soldier was also the successor to the tradition of courage first revealed in the biblical period. Ben-Gurion argued that the qualities of these new soldiers were no less heroic than those of their predecessors-the biblical warriors. Since the IDF held a special sanctity among the state's institutions, those who criticised the army were accused of profaning the holy (Liebman & Don-Yehiya 1983:98).

> The ma'abarot have an important role to play in safeguarding the nation's border. If we do not turn every *ma'abara* into a commanding ground and all *ma'abara* dwellers into persons who are capable and willing to defend themselves, we shall have no security (Hakohen 2003:215).

This shows how the transit camp, a predecessor to the development town, had an esteemed value in the Zionist military and melting-pot ethos.

Jews from Arab countries, the majority from Morocco, constituted 63 percent of all immigrants during the 1950s and were expected to become a part of the working class in rural areas (Shiblak 2005:12).[29] During the first immigration wave from 1949-53, some 85 *kibbutzim* (communal farms) and 158 *moshavim* (cooperative farms) were built, mainly along the borders with a total population of seventy thousand. Moshav is an agricultural co-operative and settlement whose members own their land and cultivate it individually.[30] Moshavim tend to be associated more with immigrants from North Africa, in contrast to the kibbutz. However, the overwhelming majority of new immigrants to Israel settled in towns and cities of abandoned villages not destined for agricultural settlement. Only one or two of every ten immigrants went to live in a farming community (Tzfadia 2011:67).

The second phase of population dispersal was realised through the Sharon Plan, which involved the establishment of twenty-eight strategically placed development towns (*ayarot pituach*) in outlying regions in the North and South. Mizrahi immigrants were disproportionately placed in development towns by government agencies in the Northern Negev, the upper Galilee, and along the borders in places like Afula, Beit Shaan and Kiryat Shemona where they were housed as a part of a wider political project (Khazzom 2005:120). They were intrinsic to political Zionism in terms of security as they functioned as a means of solidifying the boundaries of the state and thus seen as an integral part of the management of the conflict with the Arabs. Khazzom argues that the pre-state elites "removed to social and economic peripheries those whose cultural characteristics threatened the country's self-presentation as western" (ibid:120). By placing Mizrahim on the border, where they would be targets of Arab/Israeli tension, elites ensured they would not form alliances with Palestinians with whom they shared a

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[29] During the period between 1950 and 1957 alone, over 100,000 Moroccan Jews arrived in Israel transplanting almost the entire Moroccan Jewish population to Israel (Stillman 1991:166).

[30] The original moshav was a cooperative agricultural community. Several moshavim are today only small settlements or villages.

language and marginalised socio-economic position (Shafir & Peled 2002:17). The development towns also supplied Ashkenazi settlements with cheap labour, populated remote districts to prevent the return of the displaced Palestinian population and created a frontier against the neighbouring Arab countries (Yiftachel 2006:108). From the early 1950s the state distributed more and better land to both the kibbutzim and moshavim than in the development towns and later moshavim with Mizrahi majorities (Shabi 2009:163). Mizrahi immigrants became dependent on the veteran Ashkenazi settlers for their livelihood, solidifying the ethno-class hierarchy.

From ma'abara to development town

The earliest immigrants were passed from their entry camps to tented camps and maabarot, a type of more permanent transit community. The most northerly, and in time also the largest maabara (immigrant camp) of the 129 maabarot that were built in Israel, was built on the ruins of al-Khalsa (Hakohen 2003:209). The destroyed village was targeted to be the administrative, commercial and industrial centre of the Upper Galilee under the jurisdiction of the Upper Galilee regional council. The council, established towards the end of 1949, focused its municipal activities around the the absorption of new immigrants (*mizug ha`galuyot*). The first immigrants to arrive in the transit camp of al-Khalsa were fourteen families from Yemen who arrived in July 1949 as a part of operation "Magic Carpet."[31] A second group of Yemenis arrived in August, a group of fifteen families. The two immigrant groups settled down in the abandoned houses of al-Khalsa. During the first ten months only immigrants from Yemen arrived. At the end of this period there were 46 families and 177 individuals living in the village in total. By the end of 1950, as many as ten buses transporting new settlers were arriving daily from Haifa. On 30th July 1950, the regional council of the Galilee received instructions to absorb 5000 more families. Volunteers and functionaries from the centre and nearby settlements assisted the new immigrants. They were often transported directly from the port or airport to the maabara in the middle of the night. Throughout the coming years immigrants from such diverse countries as Iraq, Yemen, Morocco, Turkey, Romania and India were directed to Kiryat Shemona, most often against their wishes (Yiftachel and Tzfadia 2004). When the masses of immigrants from North Africa began to arrive

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[31] British and American transport planes made some 380 flights from Aden, in a secret operation that was not made public until several months after it was over.

in the mid 1950s, the town was transformed into the development town of Kiryat Shemona.

The immigrants were housed in tents, canvas huts and tin shacks and received some economic assistance. The Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Labour supplied the immigrants with a primary needs package with basic necessities such as simple furniture, cooking utensils and iron beds that were to become an Israeli symbol. Food and clothing were apportioned through a system of rationing and coupons. The tents in the transition camp stood eleven in a row, but were often ripped down by the wind and winter-showers. This brought about the hasty construction of metal shacks. There was no running water, bread was trucked in from outside, and the immigrants grew bitter. Disillusioned and disappointed with the harsh conditions many newcomers asked to be relocated shortly after arrival. Some left after a few days, others after several weeks, turnover was high. The lack of employment, shortage of suitable housing, distance from the centres, and specifically, the sense of disappointment and gloom which relatives and visitors spread among the settlers, encouraged them to find another, closer place of residence while they still had the opportunity to do so (Hakohen 2003:172).

The (re)making of place

A shared characterisation of settler colonial societies is the transformation of non-European spaces into European spaces (Yacobi 2000:132). In the newly established Israeli State, Palestinian spaces were given Hebrew names as an integral part of the effort to Judaize the physical and demographic landscape. Erasing Arabic names reflected the colonial practice of inventing historical continuity by omitting the indigenous history and the present day (Sand 2009:111). In the middle of the year 1950 the regional council of Galilee Alion agreed after the advice of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (Jewish National Fund), to approve al-Khalsa's new Hebrew name. Kiryat Shemona, meaning the city of eight in English, was given in commemoration of the national hero, Joseph Trumpeldor and his seven comrades who fell defending Tel-Hai in 1920.

Azaryahu (1996) notes that the power of street names derives from their ability to convey the national narrative of the past. They are instrumental in rendering the official version of history more natural when incorporated into the spatial practices of everyday life. In Kiryat Shemona commemorative street names were constructed around

a recent golden age. Anthony Smith argues that these serve an important function.

> The golden age articulates the defining moral and aesthetic standards of the cultural group; they provide hope and inspiration for moral regeneration and national rebirth; they indicate, through lineal heritage, the inherent capacity of the group to recapture its glorious past, and they provide guidance for action in the present, justifying people's sacrifices for the national cause (Smith 1999:263).

The streets were named after heroic figures, military events or great cultural achievements. Other streets were directly named after authors, poets and pioneers of Modern Hebrew. The street where I lived was named after a Russian poet, David Shimoni (1886-1956).[32] The *Hagana* Street was named after the Jewish paramilitary organisation in the British Mandate of Palestine, which later became the core of the IDF. Timelines were knitted together to expose a particular vision and collective national identity (Smith 1986:191). The absence of any symbols or characters from Mizrahi Jewish culture and heritage reflects how ethnocratic nationalism privileges Ashkenazi memory and experiences of Judaism. The street names provide a daily reminder of the subjugation of Arabic and Judeo-Arabic cultural attainments.

Figure 2. Street names in Kiryat Shemona.

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[32] The streets were named after Shai Agnon (188-1970), Haim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) and Yosef Haim Brenner (1881-1921). Zionist leaders such as Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), Ze'ev Jabotinski (1880-1940) and Joseph Sprinzak (1885-1959) also have their own streets dedicated to their memory. The Szenes Street is named after the national heroine Hannah Szenes (1921-1944) who became a symbol of self-sacrifice. Henriette Szold (1860-1945) was a U.S Jewish Zionist leader and founder of the Hadassa women's organization. Jewish philosophers such as Rambam (Moses Maimonides) and Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141) have their own streets, as do the Ashkenazi chief Rabbis HaRav Herzog (1888-1959) and HaRav Kuk (1965-1935).

A house of memory and forgetting

The museum alongside the map, census and other cultural amenities are instrumental tools in the construction of nations (Anderson 1983:178). Israeli museums housed in Palestinian mosques and homes have been appropriated and incorporated into Israelis' lives as historical heritage sites (Davies 2010:174). The Museum of the History of Kiryat Shemona was located in the former village mosque of Al-Khalsa, an Ottoman era stone building. In October 2008, the museum manager Haim Elias, guided me through the exhibition telling the story of Kiryat Shemona. Schoolchildren visit the exhibition regularly, which begins with this poster: "After 2,600 years in the Diaspora, Jews returned on masse to Eretz Yisrael, settled here and integrated into all spheres of life in the State of Israel." This idealising text portrays the return to Israel as a natural culmination of the long path of Jewish history. The Jewish people were presented as one permanent group of people, despite their spatial dispersion and temporal ruptures for a period of close to two thousands years (Ram 2011:4).The previous existence of an Arab town named al-Khalsa was briefly mentioned. An exhibition poster printed in the national colours blue and white read:

> Kiryat Shemona was born in the turbulent days of massive immigration to Israel after the War of Independence, when the locked gates of the country were finally thrownopen. It was built on al-Khalsa (home of the Gang that murdered Trumpeldor and his comrades and abandoned during the war of Independence).

The usage of the word gang reduces all civilian Arabs into armed enemies and al-Khalsa to a temporary home of the nameless murderers of the Jewish national hero Trumpeldor and his companions. It was clear that the ideological strategy of the exhibition was to gloss over the 'darker sides' of the Zionist project. The 'return' of Jews to their 'promised land' was presented as unproblematic, and as a 'national narrative without natives' (Veracini 2010:93). The brutality of the 1948 War or Nakba was conspicuously absent from the museum exhibition.

The exhibition was accompanied by black and white pictures artistically portraying hard nation-building labour and everyday life in the camp. Replicas of metal transit-camps shacks were located next to the Museum in Park Zahav to provide a glimpse of life in a ma'abara. A plastic doll dressed in Moroccan traditional clothing

was supposed to symbolise a housewife. The refrigerator of the time, an icebox, was placed in the corner of a sparsely furnished hut. The exhibition seemed to express the everyday living conditions and 'time of modesty' as necessary hardships for the national good. Immigrants were portrayed as moving willingly to the periphery and being filled with an eager nation-building spirit. This stood in stark contrast to the majority of narratives my informants who shared their memories of spatial and cultural displacement and misery, stories largely excluded from the national heroic settlement ethos. What the narration of local history indicated was therefore perhaps the wish that Mizrahim be counted as vital members of the Jewish nation-building project and be considered as proper agents of its realisation. By creating a limited space of expression, the exhibition served to reinforce the centrality of formal state discourse in Kiryat Shemona.
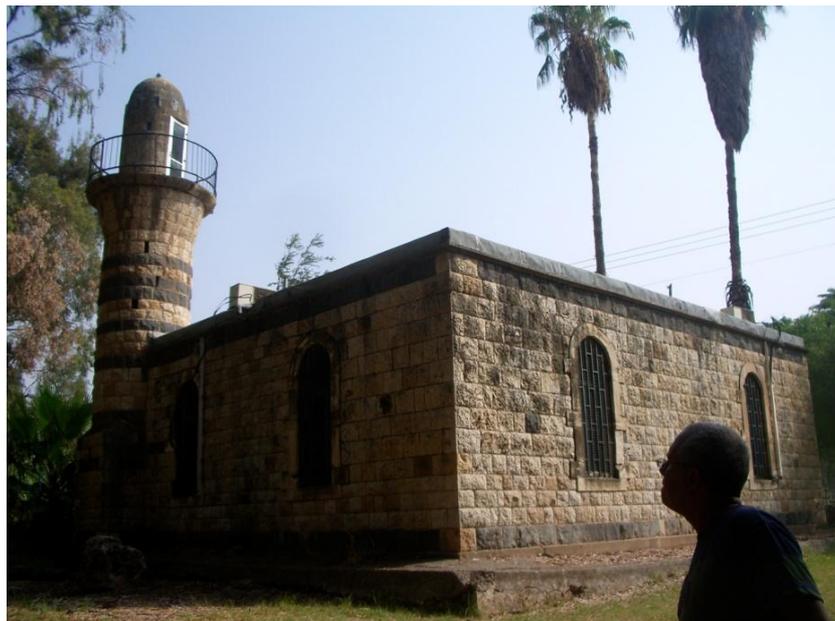
Figure 3. The museum of history located in the former mosque of Al-Khalsa.

Tsipman's diary

Haim Elias lent me the unpublished diary of an Ashkenazi state official, Tsipman, who was posted in Kiryat Shemona to monitor immigrant absorption. The diary *Al Ha-Derech Sheli* (On My Road) provides unique insights into the settler-colonial orientalising logic and the prevailing ethno-national ideology of the 1950s. One passage

describes a meeting between Iraqi immigrants stereotyped as educated and Yemeni immigrants as having a 'traditional' appearance.

> Rostam Prochi, an immigrant from Iraq whispered in shock to her sister when she first saw Kiryat Shemona: Look at what we've come to. I don't think there's a book in the entire place, and the men haven't had a haircut in at least two years. Her sister comforted her, by pointing out that a full beard and luxurious peot was a respected Yemenite custom It was the first time in their lives they had seen Yemenite Jews in their traditional clothing and full beards (ibid:125).

Tsipman wrote about the misery the immigrants experienced and referred to them patronisingly as "chronic complainers". The immigrants expressed frustration towards a broken promise given by the ruling Ashkenazi elite.

> At the end of 1952, a relative of one of the local volunteers visited. He took note of our difficult conditions and found them intolerable. He wondered if we had gone mad. Why did you leave Central Israel for this place? One day, the Arabs will come down from Lebanon and stone you. Another immigrant cried out: You've been had! Cheated! Open your eyes; can't you see that you've been parked at the end of the world? They obviously wanted to get you out of their way. They promised you something? Look what you've got...There are better places around. You have nothing to lose by leaving this pit, fit only for lost causes... (Tsipman 1953: 65).

Tsipman includes observations of other state officials working in the town at the time. Baruch Bez, a Metula region police commander, patrolled the tented transition camp in 1951 and encountered many bitter immigrants. Some would break into tears of shock and disappointment upon arriving in Kiryat Shemona.

> Is this the Garden of Eden which they promised us? They would ask: Why us? Why were we shipped here, consigned to this fate? Such a remote, desolate place…mountains closing us in, the border over our shoulders with our enemies not far beyond it… (Tsipman 1953:74).

This passage from the diary illustrates how the immigrants felt a claustrophobic sense of being entrapped and enclosed by Arab hostile enemies. The Orientalist discourse of

nation-building at the time also influenced commonly held views of Mizrahim as "exotic" Others. The establishment of a health centre brought foreigners to town, and the WHO (World Health Organization) directed delegations to witness the Israeli model of "rapid development". At the spring *Ein Zahav*, which served as a dishwasher, laundry and general rendezvous for the village's women a resident describes the encounter with outsiders.

> Volunteers, foreign contributors and ordinary tourists came in with their cameras, trying to photograph the women from every possible angle. One tourist wanted to take my mother's picture, but she wouldn't let him. He tried to explain that it was very important to him, that the picture would be published abroad so that people there would see what conditions were like in Khalsa, have pity on us, and give more money to Israel (Tsipman 1953:48).

Tsipman notes how the police commander Baruch Bez tried to instil new immigrants with a Zionist spirit and convince them about the importance of living on the frontier.

> There, in those villages and kibbutzim, Jews have settled on the border, and have been there for many years. They work by day and guard by night for their homes and families…and for us, as they are defending us too. People used to tell me that they were on the verge of leaving the area due to the conditions, but Haim Roz (the local Mapai representative) talked them out of it. He told them that one must learn to love Kiryat Shemona, that a better future awaited us all (Tsipman 1953:56-57).

This passage of his diary suggests that the state official saw it as his patriotic duty to instil immigrants with sentimental attachment for the land. The colonial practice of idealising the periphery to secure territorial dominance and control is still taking place today, particularly during wartime.[33] The promise of a better future resonates with the messages of *savlanot* (patience) I received repeatedly from my Hebrew teacher in an ulpan in Kiryat Shemona. "You can do it, with hard work and savlanot." We were encouraged to accept the current circumstances, even if these were hard and disappointing, for the sake of a better future. Haim Roz tried to convince the new immigrants of the beauty of the place by appropriating its Arab past and name. "The

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[33] Chapter 4: Fear & Strength in a border town deals with this issue further.

Arabs that used to live in Khalsa called the spring which flows at your feet *Ein Dahab* (The Eye of Gold)." Like other sites, the Arabic name of the spring was later changed to its Hebrew equivalent, *Ein Zahav*. Tsipman idealised employment as a pioneering activity referring to one of the immigrants who allegedly said:

> Early every morning, we lined up, young people from all ethnic backgrounds, singing as we marched to our work in the forestation project[34]. We hiked to the Dan regional nursery, and from there, pine saplings in hand, climbed the hills and began planting (Tsipman 1953:40).

As in the museum exhibition, the activities of Mizrahi immigrants were idealised and incorporated into a heroic view on settlement and labour. The Tsipman diary sheds light on Zionism's idealisation of settlement and the immigrants' disillusionment. These narratives are strikingly similar to stories my informants shared with me. Looking at the content of the diary in light of what my informants expressed about their life today, it becomes clear that the Zionist idealisation of frontier settlements and their actual deprivation have created parallel discourses and practices of 'strength' and 'bitterness', that have been passed down through generations.

The powerful kibbutzim

By 1953, Kiryat Shemona had 5,000 residents and the institutional framework of the town was developing. The Histadrut had maintained a network of schools since the days of the Mandate. The Public Education Act which supplanted it was not passed until 1953; only then did education become universal and compulsory. The immigrants from Yemen established a school with approximately fifty students. The stone building that housed the students had also been used as a school during the British Mandate period. The first teachers and kindergarten teachers were Ashkenazim from the surrounding kibbutzim and passed their training sessions in a hurried seminar for teachers conducted at the transition camp. Due to the economic hardship amongst the families, the strategy was to teach the students agriculture. Although the town was constructed to provide services for the surrounding settlements, the opposite happened. The population of Kiryat Shemona became dependent on the Kibbutzim for their livelihood. Mizrahi

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[34] The forestation program was managed by the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael) that was founded at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 to buy and develop land for Jewish settlements.

immigrants found employment in Kibbutzim, and these settlements established manufacturing plants at the outskirts of KS. Some immigrants were either employed in the olive harvest in the northernmost town of Metula or by *Sole Boneh* (paving and building) on construction projects. Women found work mainly in the kibbutzim and in the local nursery. A regional seedling farm near Kibbutz Neot Mordecai, became a major source of employment, and an important branch of the agricultural development industry. Some of the families from Yemen who had supported themselves through textile weaving had to undergo retraining, and began to produce mats from reeds which grew by local streams in the area and in the yet un-drained Lake Hula. Other families established small farms of their own as a supplement to family income.

The kibbutzim at the time constituted a major cultural symbol of the new modern, western-oriented Zionist national identity (Tzfadia 2007:58). Even though several Mizrahi immigrants in the development towns were employed in classic 'pioneering' work, such as the draining of the Hula Swamp, they were never considered proper haluzim *(*pioneers) or nation-builders. Their settlement activities were not spoken of as pioneering acts, but as externally directed and regulated activities (Katriel 1997:152). Mizrahim were simply reduced to tools used and controlled by the Ashkenazi centre. Pioneering was at this point in history not part of the border town agency according to the dominant account.

By 1963 the development towns had a total of 170,000 inhabitants, of which 71 per cent were Mizrahim. To reduce the high unemployment rate amongst Mizrahim, the government provided loans and other incentives to textile manufacturing, food processing, as well as to metal and chemical industries to set up factories in development towns to provide employment to unskilled immigrants.[35] In the 1970s about 70 percent of employees worked in these industries that typically pay low wages and do not require higher education or particular skills. These industries did succeed in reducing unemployment in several towns, but created other problems. The companies were run on the most part by private investors who lived in the centre, whereas the residents were employed in production lines which were on the unskilled bottom of the employment ladder. Local managers were mostly Ashkenazim with minimal connection to the towns, and they became overdependent on central government allocations. A

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[35] From the 1950s to 1970s the employment share of the textile sector in development towns increased from approximately four percent to more than 40 percent (Drori 14)

Mizrahi-dense, low-income, low-skilled town was an unintended consequence of the planning policies. The spatial proximity and economic dependence between the town and surrounding populations created tensions that continue to the present day (Swirski 1989).

The monoethnic rationality of Zionism

The Orientalist and Eurocentric foundations of the Zionist movement reflected the ideological habits of European colonialism (Shoat 1989). Herzl envisaged that the Jewish state in Palestine would "form a portion of a rampant of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism". (Herzl 1988 [1896]:96). The Zionist movement promoted the superiority of the European culture and taught the immigrants the right Zionist spirit (Ram 2002). It promoted a monoethnic rationality to make Jews national that was embedded in bureaucracy and "in its abstract, intentional principles of hierarchical organisation and integration, and in its clean-cut definitions of categories that are exclusive and inclusive" (Handelman 2004:27).

Several Ashkenazi immigrant groups arrived in Israel suffering from a policy of cultural erasure, especially Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe. However, their culture was closer to the dominant Ashkenazi-Israeli culture, and thus not stigmatised to the same extent as Mizrahi culture, which was considered too similar to the native Palestinian culture (Tzfadia 2007:67). Israel's Arab citizens were excluded from the programme of cultural assimilation, but judged on their level of loyalty to the Jewish state (Louer 2007:11).

Mizrahim were not considered to have the same Zionist spirit as the pioneers and their descendants and were met with dismay and hostility. The Ashkenazi establishment and their attitudes toward the Mizrahim were infused with prejudices reflecting their Western self-image. David Ben-Gurion is reported as saying, in the mid-1960s, "we do not want Israelis to become Arabs. We are in duty bound to fight against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and society, and preserve the authentic Jewish values as they crystallized in the (evidently European) Diaspora" (quoted in Shafir and Peled 2002:77). Jews from Arab countries were stereotyped as "primitive, aggressive and difficult human material" and forced to distance themselves from the Arabic language which had become stigmatised as the language of the Arab Other (Weingrod and Levy 2006:8). The extent of the public stigma attached to Arabic

is illustrated by the many immigrants that took new, more European sounding names.

Most of the press's references to the Mizrahi immigrants at the time were negative. Even before the immigrants from Arab countries began to arrive in large numbers, the Ashkenazi journalist Aryeh Gelblum, a reporter for the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz, wrote the following about the arriving Mizrahi immigrants:

> This is the immigration of a race we have not yet known in the country. We are dealing with people whose primitivism is at a peak, whose level of knowledge is one of virtually absolute ignorance and, worse, who have little talent for understanding anything intellectual. Generally, they are only slightly better than the general level of the Arabs, Negroes, and Berbers in the same regions. In any case, they are at an even lower level than what we know with regard to the former Arabs of Israel. These Jews also lack roots in Judaism, as they are totally subordinated to savage and primitive instincts. As with Africans you will find among them gambling, drunkenness, and prostitution ... chronic laziness and hatred for work; there is nothing safe about this asocial element. [Even] the kibbutzim will not hear of their absorption (Ha'aretz Tel-Aviv, April 22, 1949 quoted in Wurmser 2005).

This colonial racism was characteristic of the entire Zionist movement. The scientist, leading Zionist and one of the first Jewish anthropologists in mandatory Palestine, Arthur Ruppin, believed that the Jewish nation was primarily a biological entity. Inspired by Darwinism and biological theoretisation of race at the time, the young Ruppin mentioned in a footnote: "It is perhaps due to this severe process of selection that the Ashkenazim are today superior in activity, intelligence and scientific capacity to the Sephardim and Arabian Jews, in spite of their common ancestry" (Sand 2009:263).[36] David Ben Gurion described immigrants from the Orient as being "without a trace of Jewish or human education" (Shoat 1997:42). Yakkov Zerubavel, head of the Middle East Department of the Jewish Agency responded to Yosef Shprintsak's anxiety about "preserving the cultural standards given the massive immigration from the Orient" by saying. "Perhaps these are not the Jews we would like to see coming here, but we can hardly tell them not to come…." (Segev 1998:156).

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[36] Arthur Ruppin was a formative figure in what has become Israeli Anthropology.

The colonial construction of Mizrahim as eastern, uncivilised and uneducated was used to justify discrimination with regard to salaries and housing. The newspaper *HaTsvi* wrote in an editorial that: "The Yemenite worker is the simple and natural worker, capable of doing any kind of work without shame, without philosophy, and also without poetry. And Mr. Marx is, of course absent from both his pocket and his mind" (quoted in Shoat 1988:14).

The quarterly *Megamot* approached five prominent scholars of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, all of Central or East European origin, and asked them to consider this new problem that the number of immigrants from Arab countries had begun to exceed that from Europe.[37] Karl Frankenstein's article ended with the sentence: "We must recognize the primitive mentality of many of the immigrants from the backward countries" (Segev 1998:157). All participants in the Megamot symposium considered the absorption of the immigrants from Arab countries to be a cultural mission. They believed the transmission of European values and culture would uplift the immigrants from their backwardness (Segev 1998:158). In his influential book "*The absorption of immigrants*" the leading Israeli sociologist of his generation, Shmuel Eisenstadt argued along similar lines, using modernist and functionalist paradigms, stating that immigrants remained external to the social system until they became successfully integrated by the dominant group, the Ashkenazim (1954:9).

The immigration narrative of Avri Moshe

The telling of one's life is a particular way of accounting for the self, a particular kind of narrative and self-understanding (Freeman in Knowles 2004:55). Although life and narrative, living and telling are not the same, they are intricately connected, telling becomes part of living and living becomes part of telling (Knowles 2004:55). The narrative of Avri Moshe (72) reflects the ethnic tensions that emerged during the first decade of Israeli statehood. Avri arrived in Kiryat Shemona in 1950 with his family from Kifri, a Kurdish town in northern Iraq. They were sent to Haifa and the immigration camp of *Atlit* before being redirected to Kiryat Shemona a couple of months later. They were told that the town, located 115 km north of Haifa, was only

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[37] The five scholars were Ernst Simon, Nathan Rotenstreich, Meshulam Groll, Yosef Ben-David (Gross) and Karl Frankenstein (Segev 1998:157).

approximately twenty minutes from Haifa, even though it took four hours in reality. Avri had clear memories from the early years in the absorption camp:

> We could not buy what we wanted, everything was strictly rationed. We got ten eggs, one-kilo sugar, ten tomatoes…everything was prescribed. It was impossible to get more even if you had some money. You received according to the size of your family. It was similar to what you see in the primitive villages in Africa today. Until 1954 there was no electricity, and every morning you saw entire families standing in line in front of the few, shared toilets. The tin huts we lived in after the tents were extremely cold during winters and burned like an oven during summertime. It was truly awful. Everyone was in the same situation, there was no difference. This was a country we could call our own. It is a place I can feel at home…After a year we began to build a house. My entire family, all seven of us, shared two rooms. I slept next to my brother head-to-feet.

There was a great lack of employment, but some found work in the nearby Kibbutzim. In order to support his family, Avri began to work alongside his father in construction work in Kibbutz Kfar Sol at the age of fourteen. One had to be at least sixteen years old to be accepted as a worker, so Avri lied about his age. He worked in the Kibbutz for three years, eight hours a day. The kibbutz manager paid out salaries every third month, but they did not cover the daily needs of their household of nine members. Once a week it was possible to obtain a small loan of five *lirot*. Avri got tears in his eyes when sharing a painful memory of financial scarcity.

> There is one image I can't forget up until this day. My father was standing in line waiting for a loan. When it finally was his turn they said that there was no more money left to borrow. It is the first time I saw my father cry. It was very difficult. At that moment I said to myself that I would never depend on a salary. I would create a business on my own.

Careful to insist that relations were better and friendlier today, Avri described a painful memory of discrimination (*aflayia*). He knew that Kfar Giladi screened weekly films, but its cinema was declared off-limits to outsiders (meaning youth from Kiryat Shemona). In the first years the workers from Kiryat Shemona were not allowed to enter the communal dining room. "They looked down upon us because of our skin colour. But I behaved well… I did not cause trouble…I was polite… I was a good boy," Avri

said slowly, exposing his discomfort about describing his experience with discriminatory practices and attitudes.

He experienced racism when he was employed by kibbutz Kfar Sol in the 1950s. A kibbutz girl fell in love with him, but they were prevented from talking because of their different class and ethnic background. So deep went the antipathy towards Mizrahi outsiders that Avri was afraid he would lose his job if he spoke to a *bat Kibbutz* (daughter of the Kibbutz). Sometimes, after he finished work he stood outside the room where she gave piano lessons, admiring her at a distance. Avri described this part of the unhappy love-story in a very elaborate and sentimental manner. Decades later when Avri went with his wife to dance in the kibbutz he met the love of his youth and for the first time he got an explanation directly from her.

> Avri, I did not talk to my mother for seven years! I used to watch you working, and I could not talk to you although I longed to. I was frustrated because I was like the house woman, and you worked for me. I told my mother: Look at that boy, I love him. My mother burst out in anger and said: What, that boy from Kiryat Shemona. He is *black!*

What is particular noteworthy is that in contrast to my other informants who mostly shared stories of bitterness and disillusionment, Avri shared the dominant Zionist narrative of sacrifice and resilience. In correspondence with Zionist ideology, he presented the hardship he had gone through as a necessary step to individual assimilation and accomplishment. His present attitude toward the Ashkenazi Kibbutznikim was different than the sentiments he had growing up. He became a prosperous factory manager, and employed many Ashkenazim and Russian-speaking Israelis throughout the years. It seems that his socio-economic mobility and subsequent status in the local community had weakened the grief he once felt. A memory of bitterness was transformed into a personal success story of strength and resilience.

Either this is a strong example supporting the hegemony of the ethnocracy, or my position as a European researcher elevated me in Avri's eyes to a position of power that did not allow him to be put off sharing his rhetoric. My impression in meeting Avri is that he was genuine and this was an expression of who he was. Hence I do not feel comfortable with deeper analysis that would ascribe too much to him as an individual. In general, the Ashkenazi hegemony seems to have succeeded as we can see in the

example of Avri who had internalised some central myths of Zionist thought and sought to accomodate himself with the hegemonic political culture.

Grievances and Resistance

The files of the immigration departments of the Jewish Agency, the *Histadrut*, the municipalities and diaries are full of reports that document the misery of the immigrants (Segev 2000:163). Tspiman writes how delayed salaries were a source of frustation for the immigrants who found work in Kiryat Shemona (1953:43). In 1951, a horde of unemployed gathered around the employment office and a riot broke out, someone had decided to obliterate the structure and its manager, Zeév. They shouted in unison slogans: "Jobs and Bread" and "Peace and Security!" He does not reveal whether the protesters managed to throw him out of office, but it is clear that they were deeply frustrated (Tsipman 1953:43).

In addition to unemployment, discrimination and hardship, the security situation began to worsen. Confrontations with Syrian forces began to take place in the Mishmar Hayarden regions over Israel's development projects, especially the draining of Lake Hula. Israeli agriculture workers constantly transgressed the 1949 Rhodes Armistice Line into Syrrian territory. These transgressions were a reason for the Syrian attack on Tel Motila (Mount Kallah) in May 1951, which resulted in putting a stop to draining of the lake. Although the uppermost region of the Galilee had remained quiet during this period, fear of escalation drove some out of Kiryat Shemona and dispirited many others (Segev 2000:388). Faced with public discrimination and the grim realties of the immigration camps a sizable number of immigrants left Israel. Around 2500 Moroccan Jews returned to Morocco between 1949 and 1953. Several hundred returned to Tunisia, and a small minority chose to leave Israel for France, Canada and the United States (Simon 2003:499). Disillusioned and disappointed the returnees spread stories of the hardship and rough conditions they had encountered.[38] It has been estimated that during the first 25 years, approximately 75,000 entered and left Kiryat Shemona. It was hardly the realisation of a 1950 declaration that said "here will rise the city of the North" (Troen and Lucas 1995:451). The massive desertion of development towns threatened

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[38] The Israeli government tried to deter *yeridah*. One strategy was to confiscate letters by disillusioned immigrants with critical descriptions (Laskier 1994: 108).

to undermine the government's policy of population dispersal (Hakohen 2003:226).

Their relegation of Mizrahim to Zionism's internal others led to various articulations of their grievances (Massad 2006:55). More organised resistance than local protests and individual flight started with the rebels in Wadi Salib, the formerly Arab neighbourhood of Haifa in which North African Jews had been settled after the expulsion of the Palestinians. Problems with overcrowded housing, poverty, unemployment and discrimination from Israeli authorities led to a series of violent demonstrations that took place intermittently for nearly two months and spread to other urban locations (Dahan-Kalev 1999).

In early 1971, the resistance movement *Black Panthers* (*HaPanterim HaShkhorim)* was established as a reaction against Ashkenazi discrimination of Mizrahi Jews, using ethnicity instrumentally to protest their marginal social and economic position (Regev & Seroussi 2004:234). For the first time since the mass immigration from Arab countries began, there seemed to be a threat to the hegemony of the Ashkenazi establishment led by the Labour party, Mapai. It was also feelings of discrimination and deprivation amongst Mizrahim that led them to withdraw their electoral support from the 'establishment' party of the Labour alignment which had dominated every government until 1977 (Ben-Rafael 1991:35, Chetrit 2000:63). Menachem Begin was the first national politician to tap into the resentment that the development town workers nursed against the kibbutzim. The Likud Party's victory was largely due to the Mizrahi vote that paradoxically supported Begin's anti-Arab ideology because the Labour Party had thought them to be self-hating because they came from the "uncivilized" Arab world (Lavie 1996:63). A feeling that their own were governing the country (although most of the Likud Party leadership were Ashkenazim) gave Mizrahi Jews a sense of added legitimacy and allowed them to express their ethnicity without endangering their status as Israelis (Regev & Seroussi 2004: 234).

Both the Wadi Salib uprising and the creation of *Black Panthers* were unintended consequences of the state's regional planning policies; the emergence of ethnicity by the very policies that were meant to eliminate ethnic differences (Ferguson 1990). In the late 1980s, Shas played up the religious component, accusing the Israeli establishment for bestowing economic hardship on the Mizrahi population and of

disconnecting these Jews from their religious and cultural roots.[39] During the 1990s the Shas movement obtained most of their votes from Mizrahim in development towns. The case of the towns exposed a paradox; the very frontier settlements promoted as essential for nation-building, caused intra-national fragmentation and conflict (Yiftachel 2006:234).

Since the 1980s a minority of non-Ashkenazi activists has adopted the category Mizrahi as a source of empowerment for political mobilisation, social action and theoretical reformulation.[40] Mizrahim as a new collective identity was born out of resistance and solidarity against racial discrimination and oppression uniting Jews from such different countries as Morocco and Yemen. As a category of belonging it condenses a number of connotations; it embraces the past in Arab countries and it affirms the specific experiences of non-European Jews in Israel (Shoat 1998:13).

Conclusion

Zionism distanced itself from the settler-colonial context of the late nineteenth century even as it colonized a land in which others already lived. Despite attempts to construct the uniqueness of Zionism by invoking historical chronology and ethno-nationalist ideology, the explicitly racialising discourses of the leaders, intellectuals and journalists of Israel at the time, illustrate the contrary. There were clear parallels between Zionist settler colonialist coercive practices and other colonial projects at the time. Subordination was not only imposed on the indigenous populations, but also on in-between populations such as the Arab Jewish minority. The production of in- between ethno-classes was intrinsic to the colonial settlements projects that sought territorial control and cultural and socio-economic hegemony. The ethnic hierarchy and Eurocentric concept of identity was promoted both by early Jewish pioneers in Palestine and in Zionist nation-building practices. Frontier settlements were idealized as instrumental in the 'Judaization' of land predominantly populated by Palestinians. Settlements in frontier regions were crucial for securing the contested borders of the

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[39] Shas is more concerned with religion than ethnicity and how this when they used the religious term "Sephardi" and not the sociopolitical appellation "Mizrahi" (Shabi 2010: 202).

[40] One example is the Oriental Democratic Rainbow (HaKeshet Ha-Demokratit HaMizrachit) was founded in March 1996 by forty men and women, the majority of whom are second- and third-generation Mizrahim. Its main purpose was to influence the public agenda and bring a bout changes within Israeli society and institutions, struggling for increased women rights, for minorities and socially disadvantaged segments of society (Chetrit 2006).

state and preventing the return of Palestinians. Whereas Ashkenazim in Kibbutzim were valued as proper and authentic nation-builders, Jews from Arab lands were excluded from the heroic settlement ethos, and presented as primitive and backwards, in need of modern education. The colonial Westernisation/de-Easternisation process and practices compelled the Mizrahim, and others perceived to be threatening the vision of the New Jew, to distance themselves from their cultural and linguistic particularities. In one sense the Zionist melting pot did succeed since Jewish immigrants of diverse backgrounds acquired the same language and nationalist values. On another level, it failed to do so because Israelis still draw symbolic, material or political resources from ethnic differentiation.

Both state idealisation of the frontier, a sense of entrapment and colonial racism are elements that continue to resonate amongst residents in Kiryat Shemona and are essential for grasping the persistence of peripheral nationhood. The question that remains is: why, despite all the hardship and discrimination and the current withdrawal of the welfare state, the hegemony of Zionism, including settlement and the security and army apparatus, although receiving individual criticisms, largely is taken for granted and viewed as unavoidable? One answer can be derived from the prevailing logic of ethno-nationalism combined with a colonial settler society, which incorporates in-between populations as inferior, but nonetheless as members, of the expanding settling nation while simultaneously excluding indigenous populations. The next chapter examines how the state seeks to secure national unity and loyalty through Hebrew language education and state ceremonies.

Chapter 2

Promoting Love and Loyalty for the Nation

The declared purpose of the Israeli State is to serve as a 'home' for Jews worldwide. This definition excludes the Palestinian citizens from nationality, but include Jews who are citizens of other states. The Jewish character of the state is explicit at all symbolic and institutional levels. In Israel, as elsewhere, a political culture with its institutions and symbols is central in the facilitation of national identities (Smith 2001:34). This chapter shows how the logic of ethno-nationalism was promoted in a state-sponsored Hebrew language class (ulpan) and national public events. These sites, amongst others, are central to the creation of "the ideological habits which enable…nations…to be reproduced" at the heart of everyday life" (Billig 1995:6). The great identity mission of the Israeli State is to mould all Jews into one nationality. Nationalism is not simply something subjects believe in (or not) but something they become habituated to. Hebrew education in Kiryat Shemona promoted a Eurocentric discourse of identity that sought to naturalise the dominant model of Israeliness, that of a Western-oriented, Jewish citizen. The ulpan manifested itself differently in the centre than in a peripheral border town, where it was more an explicit site of didactic nationalism. The state events used explicitly national symbols emphasising sacred belonging in the ordering of feelings and to rationalise self-sacrifice to the nation. Both the ulpan and state events appealed to Jewish history and continuity, and thus reproduced a firm boundary in opposition to non-Jews. Despite the efforts of this nationalising logic to produce loyal and obedient citizens, my informants revealed a complexity of contradicting positions. They did not internalise the national ideology of unconditional unity and sacrifice to the 'homeland' uncritically. They thus challenged the Zionist hegemony of national identity but not to such an extent as to threaten it.

Nurturing national sentiments in Hebrew language studios

Kiryat Shemona is today a town of 25,000 inhabitants, in which the majority of the population belong to the Mizrahi ethno-class. The mass immigration of Jews and non-Jews from Former Soviet Union (FSU) has changed the town's demographic

composition. Today, Russian-speaking Israelis compose around a fifth of the total population in Kiryat Shemona.[41]

Learning the national language is key in the creation of national affiliation and loyalty and is a convenient administration tool for the nation-state (Eriksen 1993:103). The opposition to linguistic variation is a method of making the nation fit the state (Calhoun 1992:226). Both before and after the establishment of Israel, Hebrew education represented the educational core of Zionism and had a dominant role in the nationalisation of immigrants. In addition to military service, education in Hebrew and Zionism is still considered modular to the melting pot doctrine, and regarded as the major institutional tool in binding the allegiance of citizens through a shared Hebrew modern Jewish identity, despite ethnic and national differences (Weiss 2002:44). The majority of Mizrahi residents who arrived in Israel during the 1950s with Arabic as their primary language had learned Hebrew through schooling, in ulpanim or in the IDF. The military still runs vocational classes in high schools and special "land courses" as well as courses in Zionism and Hebrew, which usually deal with such subjects as the redemption and unity of the people of Israel.[42]

A crucial governmental instrument for the social "absorption of immigrants" (*klitat aliyah ve hevratit*) is the instruction of Hebrew in ulpan[43] (pl. ulpanim) and continues to serve immigrants today. There are numerous private ulpanim but the majority are managed by the Jewish Agency, municipalities, kibbutzim and the universities. State-sponsored ulpanim are run under the Hebrew Language Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is also in charge of the pedagogical aspects of the training, including the curriculum and socialising activities. Since the establishment of the first ulpan in Jerusalem in 1949, 1.2 million immigrants have studied in more that 220 ulpanim, and approximately 65,000-80,000 new immigrants attend the ulpan each year (www.jewishagency.org, accessed on 10th July 2006).

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[41] As with the label Mizrahi, the label Russian is grossly inaccurate. The majority come from the former European republics, especially Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus; others, the Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union. Other Russians are non-Ashkenazi Jews from Islamic Central Asian republics such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Chechnya (Rosenthal 2003:132).
[42] The study of the land pursued in the IDF is virtually non-existent in other armies (Weiss 2005).
[43] The term is derived from the root *alef*, meaning to *instruct, train or studio*.

The Jewish Agency's website reads the following:

Hebrew is not taught only as a way of understanding and managing Israeli society, but as an intensive immersion into the language as well as into the historical, cultural and religious legacy of the Jewish people. Jewish festivals are celebrated at Ulpan and class activities include music appreciation, radio and TV broadcasts and outings around the country (www.jewishagency.org, accessed on 10th July 2006).

This description illustrates how the ulpan is designed not only to teach the national language, but also to promote images of Jewishness, Israeliness and to nurture a sentimental attachment to the land. The ulpan is a key site to explore how dominant political culture both defines and transmits the cultural values it wishes new citizens to absorb (Merelman 1988:337). Several ethnographic studies of ulpanim by Israeli scholars have argued that the teaching of Hebrew serves as a medium to nurture national loyalties among newcomers (Doleve-Gandelman 1989: Katz 1982, Lerner 1991, Selwyn 1986, Golden 2001).[44] Although my own participation and observation in ulpanim in Netanya and Kiryat Shemona converge with these studies in some ways, my material shows that they are not complete in their understanding. Students were shielded from the real, changing world and taught an essentialised model of what it means to be Israeli. The Israeli cultural values which the students were supposed to learn in the ulpan in Kiryat Shemona, were not just that of a new temporal ordering, but also those of western/European modernity. Learning to become Israeli also involved learning how to become a western self, a model of Israeliness constructed in relation to the Arab (and particularly Muslim Palestinian) other. Since my Mizrahi informants historically have attended various ulpanim at various times, it is difficult to tell what kind of images of Israeliness they were exposed to. However, my ethnography in an ulpan in Kiryat Shemona can shed light on what kinds of accepted behaviour, values and images of Israeliness were presented to the students by the state-appointed educator.

The Hebrew lessons I attended from September 2008 to April 2009 in Kiryat Shemona were held in a classroom at the Arthur and Angie Fox community centre. The

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[44] Although these studies cover a variety of Ulpanim over three decades and were conducted amongst different student populations, they converge in significant ways. Israeli national culture is conceived in a similar fashion in all the five studies. They emphasis the various ways by which the Ulpan sought to divest the students of their previous identities and the role played by the teachers as maternal "cultural mediators". Finally, they link the Ulpan to a rite of passage and focus on temporal ordering, the learning of personal and collective routines as an essential element of the curriculum (Golden 2001:54).

class consisted of a core group of ten students from diverse backgrounds who attended more or less regularly twice a week. Lessons ran for three hours with a 20-minute break. Most of the students in the advanced level class had lived in the country for a couple of years and were already familiar with Israeli society. In addition to me, the class consisted of four Russian-speaking Israelis, two Christian Lebanese students, an English woman from a nearby kibbutz and a young American couple who had recently done aliyah and defined themselves as Messianic Jews, (*Yehudim Mesichim Bney*). The teacher, Judith, was an energetic Ashkenazi woman in her late sixties, who had moved from a kibbutz to Kiryat Shemona when she married her Iraqi husband in her early twenties.[45] She had reached the age of retirement after forty years as a Hebrew teacher, but she still taught classes out of "love of the language".

When I presented myself to the class for the first time, the spontaneous reaction of Denja, a Russian student, was "Ah, Oslo, the capital of peace!" His ironic comment indicated the public perception of how the Oslo Agreement was a failure because it did not secure lasting peace. Some of my fellow students commented on the fact that I was going to the ulpan despite not having any intention to live in Israel, emphasising how learning Hebrew was considered an integral step towards permanent residency and Israeliness.

My relatively good level of spoken Hebrew was commented on by Judith and several others, and she was also impressed with my knowledge of Israeli history. Turning to the other students, many of whom had lived in the country for several years Judith said: "See, Cathrine is not even Jewish and she knows so much! She is becoming Israeli fast!" Judith's comments illustrate the presumed relation between obtaining fluency in Hebrew and demonstrating national loyalty. By commenting on my non-Jewishness she tried to inspire the other non-Jews in the class, that it was indeed possible to become Israeli through the Hebrew language. In such a view, the lack of mastery of Hebrew is a sign of weak national devotion.

Rather than presenting us with a rigidly fixed curriculum, Judith brought photocopies from various textbooks, newspapers and recordings of popular songs. In contrast to the previous ulpanim I had attended in Netanya and Haifa, we did not have to pass an exam. Since our level of Hebrew varied within the class, Judith tailored the tuition to individual needs and went through new vocabulary and grammar whenever

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[45] About intermarriage in general, see chapter 3 and Judith's marriage in particular chapter 6.

we asked. In spite of the seemingly flexible and ad-hoc teaching method, Judith organised learning and conversations around two pillars that were similar to what Golden (2002) describes in her ethnographic study of an ulpan. The first was the Jewish-national calendar and the second, *aktualia,* current events and political issues. Golden argues that these set out two (sometimes contradictory) principles on which the Israeli State was founded: ethno-national peoplehood and civic citizenship (Golden 2002, Handelman 1994). The national calendar, tied as it is to Jewish holidays and national events of Jewish significance, serves as a prime means by which Israeli national culture is made Jewish. As such, the calendar can take us to the core belief system of the nation and the inner workings of nation building and state formation (ibid).

In class, we studied material associated with the numerous Jewish religious and national holidays that took place during the period of the ulpan. The emphasis on Judaism in the curriculum was not surprising in the Israeli acculturation process, but was rather a paradox in our language class where less than half of the class defined themselves as Jewish. Judith stressed the homogeneity of the Jewish collective, even though both the class and the various types of Israelis were representative of its heterogeneity.

Singing the nation into being

Véronique Benei (2008) and Deborah Golden (2002) have shown how songs can provide an entry point for exploring the formation of patriotism and nationalism in everyday life. In an ethnographic study of schools in western India, Benei shows how schoolchildren are phenemologically taught how to "feel" the nation with their bodies (Benei 2008:24). In Golden's study amongst Russian immigrants in an ulpan, the ability to sing Hebrew songs also feed into the production of national selves. "Now, like real Israelis, let's stand up and sing," the ulpan instructor tells her students, demonstrating how singing constitutes Israeliness and is seen as an integral part of a "moral education" for newcomers (Golden 2001:52).

For the early settlers in Palestine, Hebrew songs and public singalongs (*shira be tsiburi*) were a force in defining their national identity (Regev & Seroussi 2004:265). After statehood, the production of patriotic music played an essential role in the formation of Israeli identity and the strengthening of nationalism. The government

funded publication of songbooks and subsidised music by Hebrew composers. The goal was to create a national Hebrew culture, a distinctly new definition of Jewish (Zerubavel 2005:115). Israeli folk songs, also know as Songs of the Land of Israel, are still popular decades after their original release. The songs define Hebrewism as the embodiment of Israeliness, thus becoming a boundary within the ethos of Israeli national identity (Regev & Seroussi 2004:50).

These songs are still regarded as an effective way of teaching Hebrew to new immigrants, whilst simultaneously instilling them with love for the land. Judith taught us countless numbers of these patriotic pieces that were clearly aimed at instilling the students with national sentiments and identification with Zionism. Some lyrics were simple word plays, others sang of building the nation, defending it, populating it, loving the land and making it bloom.[46] Others reflected the national self-image as a country eternally extending the hand of peace to hostile neighbours such as: "*Noladeti La Shalom*" (I was born for peace).[47] The refrain goes: "I was born for peace, if only it would get here! I was born for peace, if only it would come".[48]

Songs about longing for peace resonate particularly for the border town experience through the overwhelming perception of common threats and dangers from hostile enemies on the other side. In this context of felt existential fear, several of the students identified with the song representing dominant Israeliness and sung it repeatedly. Identifying with its musical and literary content, it thus became part of a self-nationalisation process and demarcation of both a national and local border town identity.

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[46] One song we learned in the Ulpan was 'Jerusalem of Gold' (*Yerushalayim Shel Zahav*) by Naomi Shemer (1930-2004). Considered the 'first lady of Israeli song', many of her compositions resemble anthems with deep national and emotional chords. The explicitly patriotic and nostalgic lyrics often refer to an idealised Biblical landscape. She wrote her most famous song 'Jerusalem of Gold' three weeks before the Six-Day War in 1967 and added another verse after Israel occupied East Jerusalem and gained access to the Western Wall. The original song describes the Jewish people's two thousand year longing to return to Jerusalem after the destruction of the second Temple. The final verse is a celebration of Jerusalem's unification under Israeli control. In 1968, a member of the Israeli parliament, Uri Avnery, proposed that the song should become the new Israeli anthem. The proposal was ultimately rejected, but the nomination was indicative of the strong emotional response many Israelis had to the melody and lyrics. Sabina, an artist friend from a northern Kibbutz, once told me, quite emotionally, that she had never felt more *ahava* (love) for Israel than when she first heard Shemer's song.

[47] The song was written and sung by Uzi Hitman, to commemorate the Israeli-Egyptian peace process in 1978.

[48] "This particular refrain was bizarrely humming material during the second Lebanon war in 2006, a bitterly ironic coping mechanism pitted against the overwhelming national chorus for attack" (Shabi 2009:139).

The enemy within

At the beginning of each class we spent half an hour to an hour discussing various topics (*aktualia*) ranging from socio-economic issues, to political and historical events (Holocaust, Arab-Israeli war etc). Judith was somewhat tolerant of differences of opinion, but such differences had their limits. An integral part of teaching us what should be said was teaching us what should not be said, the very limits to speech itself. Judith was in a significant position of power to shape and distribute images of Israeliness. The history and topics she taught were grounded in the dominant ethno-national logic and exposed the students to partial history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In her ethos, belonging to Israeli society entailed embracing a Western and civilised self and drawing strict boundaries in relation to Arab others. During the build up to the war on Gaza the *aktualia* topic of conversation was the escalating conflict and attempts at moral legitimisation of potential war. Judith expressed her view about the situation in Gaza and the border town of Sderot:

> They (Hamas) kill innocent people in Sderot. But if we (Israel) cut off the electricity supply to Gaza, our own court will rule against it! They say Palestinians will die in the hospitals. But it is a very difficult situation. It is war. They don't want peace and they don't want Jews here. They hide behind their women and children. I can tell you a story about a group of Israeli soldiers that were going to arrest Hamas members. But they hid in a cave, and in front of that cave they had placed a pregnant woman. So the soldier could do nothing, because they respect life. We (the Israelis) respect life.

Judith's emphasis on 'respect' reflects the view often propagated by the Israeli government that IDF is "the most moral army in the world[49]".

On Thursday, the 20th November 2008, we opened the class discussion with another current topic, discussing the break down of a six-month cease-fire between Israel and Hamas-governed Gaza. The towns bordering Gaza were hit by rocket fire and the Minister of Defence, Ehud Barak, said he was ready to implement "tough measures" against Hamas. Judith asked Sharbiel what he thought Israel should do. He responded enthusiastically with a conspicuous patriotism that Israel should hit Gaza with a military

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[49] Even after the IDF military operation Cast Lead in 2008/2009, which killed hundreds of civilians, the Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak said that once again "IDF had proved to be one of the most moral armies in the world" (Finkelstein 2011:93).

strike. Judith nodded her head in agreement. "The people of Sderot have suffered a great deal and lived with rocket fire from Gaza. This can not continue."

She turned to me and asked me about my opinion. I said that I could not agree with their view and that there must be more peaceful solutions. Judith seemed upset as she said suspiciously:

I know it is difficult for you. I know. An Arab woman in Gaza is also a mother. But at one point you need to decide whether you are with the country or against the country. Look at Sharbiel. He is not Jewish, but he still loves the country. You see, Cathrine. You remember Gabi, the other Sadalnik that studied with us? He was the most Zionist in class. Whenever someone spoke out against Israel, he would defend her!

Whenever we discussed a highly sensitive and engaging topic such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Judith became less tolerant of the variation in opinion. She changed into a motherlike figure, treating the students who criticized Israeli militarism like ignorant children lacking deep identification with the Jewish nation-state. As a state representative, Judith contributed to the social production of anti-Arab discrimination by exposing her view of the Arab other as the eternal enemy. Judith shared her personal political views only a month before Israel launched Operation Cast Lead and invaded Gaza on December 27th.[50] Her views reflected the views of the government: that the invasion was an act of self-defence to protect Israeli civilians.[51] Judith's anti-Arab views and moral justification for the war were shared by many of my informants, who during the build up to the war, and in the midst of it fashioned themselves as patriotic citizens.

In class I noted how two *tzadalnikim* (a term ascribed to former soldiers of the South Lebanon army) who had obtained Israeli citizenship in 2001 faced with this suspicion of being Arab enemies within the Jewish state and not properly committed to Israel's future, fashioned themselves into loyal individuals.[52] Nadal and Sharbiel had

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[50] The war on Gaza evoked widespread criticism of what Amnesty International called "22 days of death and destruction" (Finkelstein 2010:14).

[51] Chapter four deals further with the strategic role of peripheral border towns in the moral legitimisation of warfare.

[52] The term comes from TSADAL or the acronym for "Tzva Drom Levanon" (meaning "the South Lebanon Militia"). The Russian or Yiddish word suffix connote affectionate smallness or cuteness. 110 high-ranking officers of the South Lebanon Militia and their families obtained Israeli citizenship after the war in 2006 and many of them now live in Kiryat Shemona.

joined the ulpan for two months in late Autumn 2008 after having lost their job at the Gibor textile factory which had recenlty closed. When Judith asked Nadal to introduce himself to the rest of the class he responded with a standard Lebanese (usually Christian) line: "I am from Lebanon. I am a Christian but I am *not an Arab*. We are descendants of the Phoenicians." Throughout the two months they attended they seemed eager to please Judith by demonstrating their devotion to Zionism and their contempt for Palestinians and Muslims in particular. Judith in turn was thrilled with their support of the Jewish state, and labelled them "good Zionists and good Arabs" that "the Israeli state had trusted with the privilege of guarding the lives of Israelis."

The relationship between Judith and the Lebanese students demonstrates the complex relation between loyalty and insiderness in the context of language learning. Mastering the national language is a major asset in countering one's outsider status but this alone is not sufficient. Equally important is the ability to include oneself in the dominant national ethos by holding accepted views and morals. By identifying strongly with hegemonic ideas and values, the Lebanese students symbolically transcended their backgrounds to become honorary Israelis. They also secured the prospects of obtaining work, as this group is often employed in the security sector. In exchange for belonging and gaining employment opportunities, they were largely expected not to criticise Israel.

Few ulpan participants objected to the stereotypical descriptions of the Palestinians as violent and irrationally emotional (typified by the image of the Hamas terrorist). I do not suggest that the students followed or shared the scriptural meaning of the narratives presented. Although we as students had to follow the teacher's sometimes vacuous rhetoric, we did not embrace it uncritically. The British female student from a local Kibbutz was overtly critical about the militaristic nature of Israeli society. Outside the classroom, other ulpan students criticised such narratives as unfair and referred to their own Arab acquaintances.

The harsh reality of war

Two years earlier, during a one-month intensive Hebrew Course at Ulpan Akiva in Netanya, I witnessed similar negotiations over claims to national loyalty. During this introductory beginners' class *(kitah alef),* I did have sufficient knowledge of Hebrew to

comprehend the conversations conducted in everyday life. Nevertheless, we were exposed to nationalist discourse in various arenas, from the classroom to museum visits. We were taught how to love the nation phenomenologically as patriotic sentiments were blended with other ordinary matters such as singing, hiking and eating together. This linking of the personal body and the body of the land *(guf ha'uma)* is also known as a practice IDF operates to instil national unity and loyalty (Weiss 2003:43). Combat troops are required to experience the land of Israel "through the belly"- to "walk every corner of Israel, lie in ambush in every valley, sit for days in look-out posts and learn every bush and every clod of soil in the landscape" (Roumani 1980:99 in Weiss 2003).

As in Kiryat Shemona, the program consisted of students with varying motivations for attending the Ulpan. For ten new immigrants from Russia it was a requirement and they continued to study for five more months after the intensive summer course. For American, French, South-African and Mexican Jewish tourists, it was an opportunity to strengthen their Zionist or religious identity or to 'experience' Israel before making a decision about whether to move there or not. For a medical doctor from Hebron, learning Hebrew was a purely instrumental act in order to obtain better work and higher salary at an Israeli institution. Whereas the tourists were conceptualised as potential residents in a future aliyah, the Russians immigrants were conceptualised as coming home, returning from exile and they were expected to integrate and study Hebrew.

While the ulpan nourished the participants' national sentiments, several students rejected the dominant version of Israeliness promoted at the centre. During the outbreak of what has come to be known as 'the Second Lebanon War'[53] in Israel and the 'July War' in Lebanon, conflicting views towards the obligation of showing national unity became prevalent. On the day of the outbreak of the war, July 12th 2006, we were visiting the town of Acre, thirty kilometres north of Haifa. During a boattrip, we saw smoke rising from the horizon. As we returned to the ulpan, several participants

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[53] The war began when Hezbollah militants fired rockets at Israeli border towns as a diversion for a missile attack on two armoured tanks patrolling the Israeli side of the border, killing two soldiers. Two more soldiers were kidnapped, and five killed in a failed rescue attempt. Israel responded with airstrikes and artillery fire that indiscriminately killed civilians on a massive scale. The war killed at least 1,200, people mostly Lebanese citizens, severely damaged Lebanese civil infrastructure and displaced approximately one million Lebanese (Human Rights Watch, August 2006, retrieved on 12th November 2011). Forty-three Israeli civilians were killed. Thousands of civilians fled from these regions toward the central towns and cities, while others, mostly poor residents, took refuge in bomb shelter (Tzfadia 2011:117).

expressed their worries and concerns. They felt that they had been poorly informed about the escalating conflict and that they were shielded from the harsher reality of Israeli society. The following day their frustrations intensified. The language centre was located close to an IDF military base, and it became increasingly difficult to study due to the loud noise from the Apache helicopters. During breaks students ran to watch the news in the lobby reception area. Within three days, approximately half of the summer students decided to leave. Some had relatives abroad who were worried about them. A couple of students from the United States said that it was not their war and that it was difficult to be nationalistic about a country you did not live in. A young student expressed doubts about the government's military strategy and the human suffering it caused. Other American students became fiercely nationalistic and argued that Israel deserved unconditional support and defence by Jews worldwide. Loyalty and affiliations were shaped by several factors and the students spoke and behaved in highly conflicting and even confrontational ways. However, the common sentiment for the summer students was that they felt uncomfortable with being exposed to the harsh realities of war which did not correspond with the images of peaceful integration promoted at the ulpan.

The summer ulpan in Netanya and the ulpan in the border town of Kiryat Shemona focused on nurturing an ethno-religious and national identification with the Israeli state. In contrast to these two, the ulpan I attended at the University of Haifa Autumn 2007 and Spring 2008 was promoting a discourse of multiculturalism. In comparison with the nationalist rhetoric of the ulpan teacher in Kiryat Shemona, the teacher in Haifa never shared her personal political views, and focused more on asking the students questions about Israeli society and current events. She often let us initiate conversations, sometimes based on practical difficulties we encountered in our daily lives.

The teaching method was different, with more written exams. We were also allowed to choose topics we wanted to give a presentation on. However, a key point is that none of the students were in the process of doing *aliyah.* Although a few were contemplating doing it in the future, the main aim of the programme did not seem to be producing a quick and deep identification with the Israeli nation-state. More than the two other ulpanim that instructed coping strategies of *salvanot* (patience) and *koach (strength),* the Haifa teaching was focused on grammar. The students were also younger, more educated and highly conscious of the political situation and avoided

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political talk in class, perhaps a strategy to avoid confrontations.

In all three ulpanim I attended the students maintained their own interpretive space where there was room for manoeuvre. However, the boundaries of the nation appeared more closed in the ulpanim targeting new immigrants and residents in a deprived town valued historically as a frontier settlement. In Kiryat Shemona the Hebrew language class was more an explicit site of indoctrination than in Netanya and Haifa. For the students, there was less room to protest the ulpan instructor's state and self-appointed mission to persuade students into national loyalty and residency. The students, most of whom were placed on the bottom rungs of the ladder of the Israeli ethnocracy, had used government subsidies to purchase affordable housing and were still highly dependent on state benefits. They thus seemed more inclined to subscribe to the canonical symbols of Israeliness. For individuals living in a stigmatised periphery, this endorsement of national unity and self-fashioning as loyal, served as a strategy for a promise of upward social mobility and a better future.

The nationalization of death

In addition to nationalist education in the IDF, schools and on television, one way the Israeli state strives to instill a sense of national cohesion is through public state events. These events are part of the socialisation process that teaches citizens desirable behaviour and values. They are aimed at directing feelings, ideas and people through certain kinds of practice (Handelman 2004:4). For Emile Durkheim, the main purpose of commemorations and public festivals was to ensure continuity and to serve as mechanisms of social integration. In 1915, he wrote:

> There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments, hence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies…What essential difference is there between an assembly of Christians celebrating the principle dates of the life of Christ, or of Jews remembering the exodus form Egypt…and a reunion of citizens

commemorating the promulgation of a new moral or legal system or some great event in the national life (1982:427).

Anthony Smith has concluded that much of what Durkheim wrote about the totemic rites and symbols of Australian tribes "applies with far greater force to nationalist rites and symbols" (Smith 2004: 27). If the nation is a community that one is willing to die for, then it must be capable of touching very intense emotions. People do not sacrifice their lives for the nation itself but for its symbols that have the power to instil passions and profound emotion in its followers. The symbols must simultaneously justify a power structure and give meaning to people's experiences in order to motivate them to give personal sacrifices for the nation. Nations are thus similar to symbols and gather individuals in a "symbolic presence of the dead, the living and the unborn members of society" (ibid: 223). In contrast to Durkheim and Smith's functionalist argument about the integrative nature of symbols and rituals, we will see below that state events reveal tensions, contradictions and conflicting positions regarding the official categorisation of national belonging.

Generations of Israeli youth have been educated and socialised in the ideal that it is ultimately honourable to sacrifice oneself for their country (Zerubavel 1997). Joseph Trumpeldor's supposedly final words uttered in Hebrew: "*tov lamut ba'ad artzenu*" ("It is good to die for our Land") emerged as an almost sacred credo in the eyes of the *haluzim* (pioneers). Since then, the defence of the Tel-Hai settlement has emerged into a sacred story and symbol of patriotism and steadfastness in the national Israeli culture.[54] The Tel-Hai museum, located north of Kiryat Shemona, symbolically aligned the heroic death of the early pioneers to the current obligation of sacrificing oneself for the sake of the national whole.

In Israel, civil religion is expressed both in myth, ceremony and the IDF. Through compulsorily military conscription and culture, Israeli citizens are taught to build sacred ties to a homeland worthy of both praise and sacrifice. Israel conscripts the majority of its Jewish citizens. Military service is mandatory for both young men and women, except for Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox Jews, who are exempt or who enrol voluntarily. Men serve three years while women commonly serve two, and men are

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[54] The Tel-Hai settlement was founded in 1916 by a group of *Hashomer* guards, an organisation that believed that only Jews should guard Jewish settlements. After the First World War, Tel-Hai and other Galilee settlements were transferred to French rule and suffered in the Arab revolt against the French (KS museum leaflet).

called to *miluim* (reserve duty) regularly until the age of at least fifty-two. The result has made the Israeli civilian as Yigal Yadin, the IDF chief of staff who designed the system put it, "a soldier on ten months leave" (Yadin quoted Ben-Eliezer 1998:321).[55]

Heroic death is commemorated throughout Israel and every combat casualty receives considerable coverage in the daily newspapers (Merom 2003:170). There are vast numbers of war memorials and shrines where commemoration rites are held at thirty-nine military cemeteries throughout the country (Lomsky-Federer & Ben-Ari 1999). Individual and collective battle causalities are remembered in the names of streets, hills, waterways, public parks, buildings and other sites almost everywhere in Israel. In Kiryat Shemona, two streets in the main centre were named after two fallen soldiers, Dan Dayan and Uri Ilan.[56] A memorial wall was constructed to commemorate fallen soldiers. Beneath the names of fallen soldiers was a large blank space waiting to be engraved with more names. The empty spaces can be seen as a reminder of existential uncertainty, of war as an ongoing and proximate event to which citizens are obliged to sacrifice their lives.

The nation-in-arms comes to the fore on Remembrance Day for the War Dead and Victims of Terror.[57] The Israeli ministry of Foreign Affairs states the following about the commemoration on their website:

> Yom Hazikaron is a day of collective and personal anguish mingled with awe and honour for the fallen. It is a day on which the living rededicate themselves to the State of Israel, so that they may be worthy of the sacrifice of those who died for its survival (www.mfa.gov.il/, accessed 10th October 2009).

The narrative presented is one of Israelis expected to remember and internalise the deaths of thousands into a communal sense of grief. It is the embodiment of the military state of the past, present and future. The national ideology of commemoration constructs a narrative of emobodiment through which (the corpses of) fallen soldiers

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[55] Chapter four deals in more detail with military service and the rise of Mizrahim in IDF.

[56] Haim Roz was a Mapai local representative in Kiryat Shemona in 1949 and chairman of the street-naming committee that named the streets after his two former students (Tsipan 1953:48).

[57] The commemoration of victims of terror was included in 1999 as a consequence of Israel's experience with terror directed against civilians over the past two decades. Military death is not always heroic, but accidents, suicides or soldiers killed by friendly fire are also commemorated on this day.

become symbols and guardians of some collective body (Weiss 2005:5). The living generation, by identifying with self-sacrificial death, turns death and defeat into life and victory. A glorification of death gathers the dead, living and unborn and glides into a limitless future.

Whether conceptualised as religious or secular, most nation-building projects are endowed with sacredness. Chosenness and other religious motifs, myths and symbols are "deep cultural resources" that continue to provide the "basic cultural and ideological building blocks" central to the discursive or iconic representation of self and others (Smith 2003:254-5). The very distinction between national and religious identites is therefore problematic, particularly where the construction of ethnic identities is concerned. National identities in Europe were formed by Christian theological discourse and preserved, even in a secularised form, aspect originating from theological discussion after the Reformation (Jamal 2001:283). Zionist nation-builders utilised symbols of traditional religion and recognised the importance of traditional ceremonies and holidays. Berl Katznelson, one of socialist Zionism's foremost thinkers, stated that: "the Jewish year is full of days whose depth of meaning is nowhere surpassed. It is the interest of the Jewish labor movement to squander the forces latent in them" (quoted in Liebman and Don-Yehiya 1983:48). Ben-Gurion used exsisting structures of sentiments to 'sacralise the nation'. He conceptualised the Bible as the identity card of the Jewish people, as well as the proof of its claim to the land of Israel. His concept of history is clear and straightforward:

> When we went into exile, our nation was uprooted from the soil in which the Bible had grown, and torn the political and spiritual reality in which it had formed(…) In exile, our nation was disfigured and the image of the Bible likewise deformed. Christian Bible researchers, with their Christian and anti-Semitic aims, turned the Bible into a plinth for Christianity, and even Jewish commentators, who had been removed from the environment of the Bible, its spiritual and material climate, could no longer understand the Holy Book properly. Only now, when we are again a free nation in our country, breathing once more the air which enveloped the Bible as it took shape, has the time come, I believe, in which we can perceive the nature and truth of the Bible, historical, geographical, as well as religious and cultural (Ben-Gurion quoted in Sand 2009:109).

Israel's three national days, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance

Day,[58] Remembrance Day for the War Dead and Independence Day, are presented by the State as secular, but they have deep religious underpinnings.[59] As historian Saul Friedlander notes, through the close association of these three commemorations "the traditional (Israeli) mythic pattern of catastrophe and redemption is forcefully reaffirmed" (Friedlander in Confino et all 2008:251).[60]

Yom HaZikaron (Remembrance Day) is widely observed throughout all sectors of Israeli society, exception most Arabs and non-Zionist *Haredi* Jews. Druze and Bedouin, many of whom have served in Israeli military are exceptions, as some do attend the commemoration rituals.[61] Like other Jewish holidays, Remembrance Day begins the preceding night at sunset. Like Holocaust day, it is marked by a nationwide *tzfirah* (siren), accompanied by two minutes of silence. Israeli citizens are expected to stop their activities to pay tribute to the fallen soldiers. Even drivers exit from their cars on highways to take part in the commemoration. The first nation wide siren at 8 PM marks the beginning of Memorial Day and the second at 11 AM is sounded immediately prior to the public recitation of prayers in the military cemeteries. All places for public entertainment like cinemas or restaurants are closed for twenty-four hours (from sunset to sunset). Flags are flown at half-mast, the radio stations play melancholic, patriotic songs, and military orchestras perform IDF songs. Drawing upon the intimacy of home and family, the daily newspapers portray the lives of fallen soldiers, and TV channels screen interviews with their family members. Numerous public ceremonies are held throughout Israel, and the education and university system arrange ceremonies for students and teachers.

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[58] Through the enactment of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Law in 1959 the Israeli State claimed exclusivity on the memory of the Holocaust. From the inception of the State of Israel, Mizrahim have been socialized into denying their own displacement trauma. In Israel, the diasporic national trauma preferred by politicians, media, and the educational system, is the Holocaust.

[59] These three days are not part of the liturgy in synagogue, but attuned with it. For Orthodox Haredi Jews, Independence Day is a religious holiday because they believe that the establishment of Israeli marked the beginning of messianic redemption, and they add a special prayer of thanksgiving, *hallel* (Goldman 2000:172).

[60] When I observed the commemoration even in Haifa, a group of young religious men and women recited *tehilim* (Psalms) in front of the stage after the official closing of the ceremony, showing the sacred meaning given to the holiday.

[61] After 1954 Arab citizens were exempted from military conscription because the military leadership did not want to risk recruiting soldiers who were stigmatised because they were Permanently tainted with the suspicion of treachery. Exceptions were the Druze and parts of the Bedouin community who accepted compulsory military conscription in exchange for official recognition as a community in their own right, thus entering into nothing less than a 'blood pact.' This gave them semi-autonomy in the management of their internal affairs and allowed them to enjoy a status distinct from that of Arabs of other religious affiliations.

Presenting united soldiers in the sunset

The Israeli Memorial Day YomHaZikaron illustrates the profound meaning giving to death and its power in the service to the nation. The day is constructed to unify the citizens of Israeli with the memory of the state's fallen soldiers. It links the lives of citizens to the life and faith of the nation-state, by focusing on the mourning nation-in-arms and heroism through death.

A nation-wide siren marked the opening of the public Remembrance Day ceremony in Haifa Remembrance Garden I attended on May 7th 2008. The audience, counting approximately eight hundred people, stood still while the memorial torches were lit and the Israeli flag lowered to half-mast. The assembly on stage was dressed in white (except the three female choir members doing their army service who were wearing their IDF uniforms). The choir performed a popular song by Ehud Manor; *Ein li Eretz Acheret* (I have no other homeland), while the list of all the fallen soldiers and victims of terror from Haifa were projected across the screens.[62] At this stage of the ceremony I noted visible tearful eyes and heard a few quiet sobs.

> I have no other homeland
> Even if my land is burning
> One Hebrew word burrows
> Into my veins, into my soul
> With an aching body
> A hungry heart,
> This is my home.

Following Manor's sentimental song, an artist read the text *Yizkor (*may (God) remember) from the root word *zakhor*, remember.

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[62] Ehud Manor (1941-2005) was an Israeli songwrite who often wrote lyrics for some of the monst canoncial Israeli-Ashkenazi pop songs. "I have no other homeland" was written in 1982 during the 'War of Attrition', during which Manor's younger brother was killed (Gordis 2006). Manor wrote the song as a response of the old guard Ashkeanzi Isral becoming anxious about the Mizrahization of the public sphere. Ironically, the song transgressed ethnic boundaries and gained national coninicity when Corinne Al'al, an out-lesbian singer of Tunisian origin, adopted it as part of her repertoire (Lavie 2012).

May God remember the valiant men and women who braved mortal danger in the days of struggle prior to the establishment of the State of Israel and the soldiers who fell in the wars of Israel.

May the people of Israel cherish them in their memory; let them mourn the splendour youth, the altruism of valour, the dedication of will and the dignity of self-sacrifice, which came to an end on the battlefield.

May the loyal and courageous heroes of freedom and victory be sealed forever within the hearts of all Israel, in this generation and forevermore. (http://www.izkor.gov.il/izkor11b.htm. Accessed on 5th January 2010)

Though the ceremony was brief in time, it illustrated that more struggles will come in the future, thus creating a cult of insecurity where the only stable common denominator is the strength of the IDF. The ultimate sacrifices of the past rely on the willingness for sacrifices in the future.

Figure 4. A choir performing in front of a soldier in a glowing sunset.

Figure 5. The national flag waving over the blooming land.

The event relied heavily on a variety of sensory effects, including music and movement to evoke emotion. The myth of the glamour of military service was projected on five monumental screens. Heroic imagery of soldiers in a glowing red sunset fully equipped with their guns faded into pictures of parachutes with red tulips that faded into an image of a waving Israeli flag. The images were of only male soldiers, thus showing how the nation-in-arms was gendered as a clear masculine creature; strong, resilient and well-built. The masculine militarised body was linked to the body of the blooming land. The uses of national symbols and metaphors such as torches, flags, choreography, collages and coloured lights were directed towards invoking a sentimental mood and identification with the State. As is frequent in Zionist cosmology, there was a deliberate knitting together of timelines and place makers where the present and past were identified in the same space (Handelman 2004:121). During the memorial services, even exclusively Jewish symbols such as the *Tallit* (the Jewish prayer shawl) and the *Magen David* (Shield of David) implied continuity with the past and a pattern of destruction and rebirth.

There are contradictions of citizenship, nationality and religion when a Druze

officer stands in front of the Israeli flag.[63] Whether he is challenging conceptions of nationhood and citizenship, or is an 'honorary Jew' he is inevitably ambiguously positioned within the event. The same contradiction was evident when he sang the words of the national anthem, *HaTikva:* "while yet within the heart, inwardly the Jewish soul yearns". From the outset, all possibility of psychological identification with the state, other than through conversion to Judaism or military sacrifice, was excluded, since the symbols of the State are derived from the Jewish religious tradition.

In his speech, the mayor of Haifa, Yona Yahav, stated that on this day the ethnic divisions in Israel were of no importance, "because we are all protecting the same country". A Druze military officer from Daliat al-Carmel, a village outside Haifa, said that the Druze were just as ready to sacrifice their lives for the nation as Israel's Jewish citizens because they, too, "had no other homeland", invoking the sentimental lyrics and mood of Ehud Manor's song. The mayor's speech, stressing the unification of Israeli citizens, showed how the state event, in the absence of political consensus, presented solidarity and unity through embracing the nation-in-arms. The mayor reinforced an image of the nation as a deep horizontal comradeship as argued by Benedict Anderson (1991:7). By claiming the unity of the people on this particular day, he acknowledged the disruption to unity posed by ethnic and class divisions. From the perspective of nationalism from below, the consequence is that full national belonging for non-Jews exists only on days of national celebration, whereas on other days of the year it does not. Heroic death and support for fighting provide a promise of equality. If a non-Jewish citizen cannot live as a complete Israeli, he or she can certainly die as one. Moreover death, since it purifies, is the ultimate form of atonement.

Consuming the nation

While much has been written about the creation of state events, less has been said about the various ways in which their audiences consume them. Nationalism studied 'from above' necessarily neglects the role of individuals in the creative construction and consumption of the nation (Cohen 1996:804). In his study of Scottish nationalism, Cohen argues that the multi-vocal nature of the nation as a symbol has the ability to mean different things to different people, while at the same time suggesting unified

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[63] The Israeli flag was designed for the Zionist Movement in 1891.

identity. He argues that "regardless of the nature of the regime, it is crucial to an understanding of how individuals perceive their selves and, therefore, to how they perceive their nations" (Cohen 1996:806). This insight has consequences for how we approach agency in the anthropological study of nationalism from below. Although the state is constructing national meanings for sites and symbols, citizens do contest and negotiate state events and celebrations sanctifying the national collectivity.[64] Passions can be mobilised but not at all times, easily or automatically (Brubaker 2006:36).

The nationalisation of military deaths and mourning at Remembrance Day generated conflicting responses. For Lior, a twenty-four year old student I met in Haifa, the event revealed a tension between national observance and private commemoration. Lior felt alienated from large, state ceremonies, and argued that a private Kibbutz ceremony provided a more authentic and personal atmosphere. Traditionally, many war victims were soldiers from the kibbutzim, and Lior himself had lost an uncle in the Yom Kippur War. However, instead of commemorating his death through national grief, his family demanded recognition for the singularity of the tragedy. Lior expressed ambiguous feelings with the staged transition from Memorial Day to Independence Day. The grief he felt for his lost relatives, would contradict the public expression of joy and celebration. Lior's strategy for dealing with this tension was to avoid the big masses and stay at the northern Kibbutz.

Another challenge to the state's appropriation of memory and death appears in Eyal Sivan's documentary *Yizkor: Avdei hazikaron* (Yizkor: The Slaves of Memory, 1993). The film critiques how the trauma of the Holocaust is appropriated by the Israeli government as an ideological tool to create unity.[65] The title reflects the conclusion of the film, that citizens are slaves of memory. However, the movie director Sivan has himself moved to Western-Europe, a position that stresses detachment from the collective experience and national obligation to commemorate (Sicher 1998:155).

Omer, an Israeli who I met at the University of Haifa, was equally critical of state-orchestrated rituals of commemoration. Like the movie director, Omer was

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[64] This will be elaborated on in the following chapters.
[65] In the film 'Defamation' (2009) the Israeli director Yoav Shamir deals with a similar issue. The Holocaust is appropriated for nationalist causes and collective anxiety and fear are its direct consequences. "We are raised to believe that we are hated", says an Israeli high school girl on her way to a concentration camp in a Poland she believes is essentially antisemitic. The phenotypes, last names, and accents of the Israeli schoolchildren indicate that the participants were Mizrahim. The paradox of the participants' ethnic composition en their emotional responses during the school trip has been discussed by Mizrahi alternative media.

comfortably placed in the Israeli upper-middle class and could afford to express detachment from hegemonic values. Although he was a former solider, he rejected the state's effort to create a militarised and morally unified nation. Disillusioned and upset with his past military experience, he did not attend any state ceremonies. Having served in an elite unit of the army in Hebron for two years, he had witnessed humiliating practices towards Palestinians that had led him to object to the military demands of the state. He now referred to himself a *refusnik*, one of around 2,000 Israeli soldiers that so far have refused to serve in the Palestinian occupied territories.[66] Around 250 soldiers have served prison terms for various levels of refusal. Although they are numerically few, their stand provides a model for resistance and poses a direct challenge to the hegemony of the Israeli military and their world-view (Perets 2004:10).

Omer rejected the demands of the nation-in-arms by refusing to serve in the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces). He was almost jailed when he failed to show up for his reserve duty. Emotionally he said that he had no belief in the army: "The army gave me nothing, just a huge scratch. The problem is that most people believe in all the myths the system serves them. I try to avoid it. Yesh gvul. (There is a limit)." Omer was not polititcally active in any organisation, but he sympathised with the Palestinians. Two hours before the state ceremony in the Remembrance Garden was about to begin, I was invited to the flat of his friends in downtown Haifa, located on Balfour Street. The walls were covered with symbols of political sympathies and activism: Palestinian flags and *Nakba* posters. Omer spoke passionately about the mistakes he believed the Israeli State was making in its treatment of Palestinians. While his old friends from the army would attend the IDF ceremony, he chose to find "the most anarchist space he could think of". At the entrance of the Remembrance Garden where the ceremony was about to start, Omer left me. He seemed slightly uncomfortable, perhaps knowing that this was the first year he would avoid the national commemoration.

The efforts of the state to produce national obedient citizens failed in Omer's case. He challenged the principle that militarism should be an intrinsic part of Israeliness through conscientious objection. Similar decisions of dissent are made overwhelmingly by those who are native-born, Ashkenazi, secular or middle class and who are situated in urban centres (Cohen 2008:63). In contrast, the peripheral Mizrahi

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[66] There are not many Israelis who identify themselves as *refusniks* and the stigma attached to not supporting or cooperating with the army is high. In March 2005, 635 refusniks signed a letter and established the organisation Courage to Refuse (http://www.calpeacepower.org/0101/refusnik.html).

ethno-class is more inclined to support militaristic ethno-nationalism in the hope of a rise in status and social mobility (Tzfadia 2011:12). Although Omer's refusal to do his military service was true of only a small minority in Israel, his reservations are not uncommon. His stand also has important consequences for how we treat agency. Even within a militarised state such a Israel, where the lines between the army and society are blurred, Israeli citizens do re-negotiate the official demands of the nation-state.

Ignoring the Sirens of remembrance

Israel is unique among other countries in that its Remembrance Day is adjacent to its Independence Day. The construction of the content of these days and their dates is naturalised by their intimate connection and resemblance to religious holidays and rituals.[67] *YomHaZikaron* glides into the festive *Yom HaAtzmaut* (Independence Day) and many Israelis spend the day of official mourning preparing for the official joy. Twenty minutes to ten in the morning, before the siren (*tzfirah*) on May 8th 2008, I entered a grocery store with Eran, a twenty-eight year old student. He was responsible for the barbeque preparations for his group of friends, all of whom were middle-class Ashkenazim from the wealthy suburb of Ramat HaSharon outside Tel-Aviv. He told me in advance that a grocery store was not the ideal place to find oneself during the siren. Especially not this particular one because it was run by Russians. A female friend had told him that a similar store under Russian management had forced her to serve customers during the siren the previous year.

Standing next to the cheese counter inside the shop, we were prevented from hearing the siren itself but an unaffected voice coming from the speaker informed us that it had started. "Please value two minutes silence for the commemoration of the fallen soldiers and victims of terror." Eran stood entirely still with his head bowed towards the floor, closing his eyes and commemorating. So did most of the other customers, but a few continued with their shopping. The voice from the speaker notified us that the siren had stopped and we could continue with our grocery shopping. Discussing the event with Eran afterwards, he said that perhaps some of the Russians

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[67] The symbiotic connection of mourning and joy is integral to Judaism. The fast of Esther precedes the gaiety of Purim, Yom Kippur is a few days before Sukkot. During a Jewish wedding ceremony, the breaking of the glass recalls the destruction of Jerusalem and precedes the celebration.

had not learned or adapted to the national customs or worse, they chose not to respect the commemoration. However, it was not as "bad as he had expected and perhaps some of them (the Russians) had finally learned".

Telling Rinat, a Mizrahi Jewish woman in her early thirties from Haifa, about the failure to respect the siren in the grocery store, she seemed shocked and offended. She said that none of her friends would dream of not paying respect on Remembrance Day. She claimed that almost everyone knew someone who had been killed in war and you had to respect those who had sacrificed their lives. Although she did not remember how or when she learned the importance of the day, she grew up knowing that "it was something serious". "This day reminds us that we are all together in this."

In the short story *"Siren",* the Israeli author Etgar Keret deals with the ambiguity of national commemoration. A boy avoids being beaten by escaping from his assailant while the siren sounds on Holocaust Remembrance Day (Keret 2001). When his story was included in the Israeli high school curriculum, a group of teachers refused to teach it and gave two reasons. The first was that you couldn't portray someone who does not respect the sound of the siren in a positive light. The second was that the teachers believed that most of the students were not making a conscious choice about walking during the siren's sound. The author explained that:

> If they're not aware of the fact that they're choosing not to walk during the siren, it becomes meaningless, because you're reducing it to a reflex, like when you whistle to a dog and it sits. You have to know that you can choose to walk in order to make the choice not to walk (Interview with Etgar Keret in www.belivermag.com, accessed on 24th February 2009).

The teachers believed that the national ritual of observing the siren had become entrenched and that this knowledge was taken for granted. The boy failing to respond spontaneously and instinctively to the sound was accused of challenging what was considered proper conduct. Native-born Israelis, such as Eran, Rinat and the high-school teachers, were those who observed the national commemoration and showed proper respect for their fallen comrades. Compared with their fluency in the national repertoire and its symbolic register, the Russian customers were perceived as suspect national subjects just as the fictitious schoolboy in Keret's short story. Failing to perform the national custom, they were accused of being ignorant and assaulting the

national tradition.

Flagging the Nation

> It is my great pleasure to extend to you from Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the State of Israel and the Jewish people, our best wishes on the occasion of Israel's 60th anniversary. Every state needs a dream, a purpose and a moral compass that unites the nation and guides its leaders. The establishment of the State of Israel sixty years ago signified both the fulfilment of a millennia-long dream and a new beginning. Just as the dream of Israel did not end upon the founding of the State, Zionism did not conclude when Israel declared its Independence.

> From the essay: Building Israel's Tomorrow Today (2008) by: Tzipi Livin (Former Vice prime minister and minister of foreign affairs).

The title of Tsipi Livni's celebratory essay shows how a connection in time and space between the fathers and the 'forefathers' of all the members of the present community is utilised to promote a united nation in the present. The national celebration of Independence Day (*Yom Ha'atzmaut*) is assembled to nurture this unrestrained allegiance and symbolic attachment to the nation-state. Ordinary Israelis are encouraged to take part in a range of holiday activities intended to signify and sanctify the existence of the Israeli (particularly Jewish) state (Podeh 2011:3).

I attended and observed the morning of the national celebrations in Haifa and the rest of the celebrations in Tel-Aviv where Israeli citizens and tourists from all over the world gathered for the celebration of Israel's 60th anniversary. Concerts featuring Israeli music and dance were held all day, and a military parade marched down the main streets. Military jets and paratroopers were essential components of the spectacular IDF show. Thousands cheered and saluted from the beaches as the Israeli Air Force flew above their heads. As evening fell, fireworks were displayed throughout the city.

National flags are the most external and immediately visible rallying symbols of nationality and citizenship, serving as metonyms for the nation at large (Firth 1973 in Benei 2008:11). Flags are, in Turner's terminology condensed symbols as they compress a broad range of meanings and are rich in aesthetic and emotional connotations (Eriksen & Jenkins 2007:3). For every patriotically waved flag we

encounter, many more sit quietly in the background providing daily reminders of nationhood. In Israel, the national flag *(degel)* is not only waved on particular annual celebrations. The flag can be seen displayed constantly outside most public buildings hanging from the ceiling in shopping centres as well as outside individual homes. The nation is flagged daily in the lives of citizens. In Kiryat Shemona, beside the national flag, the nation-in-arms was waved. The central bus station was covered with the flags of different IDF units and the kiosk was decorated with infantry corps' shoulder tags. Stickers from the Golani brigade, the most highly decorated infantry unit in the IDF, were plastered on the cola dispensers. As such, the logic of militaristic ethno-nationalism infused with religious symbols was on permanent public display, providing daily reminders of a nation-in-arms.

Figure 6. The bus station in Kiryat Shemona decorated with national flags and flags from various military units.

Figure 7. A banal reminder of nationhood in a grocery store.

Figure 8. "The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building" (Billig 1995:8). The Ministry of Interior (*Misrad HaPnim*) wrapped in the national flag.

In the weeks leading up to the national celebration, the flag was exhibited on an extraordinary scale and appeared on all kinds of surfaces. The advertisement industry knew how to utilise the occasion, and published all kinds of tempting offers for "only 60 shekels", presented with the Israeli flag as the background. Although such overtly corporate nationalism, aimed at marketing through the flag, could potentially have a numbing effect on consumers, the intent was clear: to utilise patriotism for the increased sales of marketed commodities. White and blue Israeli flags were waved enthusiastically from cars, balconies, public buildings, rooftops and highways. The non-profit organization *ELEM* (for neglected Israeli youth in distress) constructed the biggest Israeli flag in the world. The *Azrieli* centre's square building in Tel-Aviv was lit up by 60.000 bulbs forming an enormous Star of David as a part of their 'Light of Hope Campaign'. I counted passing cars in Haifa for ten minutes and, I noticed that more than three out of ten cars had one or two Israeli flags attached to them.

This massive flagging was heavily assisted by Bank Hapoalim, Israel's largest finance institution, which demonstrated a gesture of corporate patriotism by handing out one million flags in the week leading up to Independence Day. Distributed through the daily newspaper *Maariv*, the flag was given as a present accompanied by the text: "Israel is celebrating its 60th. Let's all join together to mark Israel's 60th Independence Day by hanging the flag with pride." Sheli Yehimovitch, a member of the Knesset, called for the flags not to be hung because they were made in China but also because the design was wrong. "On the flag distributed by Bank Hapoalim, the Star of David appears upside down, resting on two points, which is not how it should be according to the law. Had the bank commissioned flags from an Israeli company, this disgrace could have been avoided (I*srael Hayom 14th May 2008).*" That the flag made in China was not good enough tells a lot about what counts as a proper national symbol.

The substantial reproduction and distribution of the flag encouraged public patriotism during this particular celebration. However, flagging does not necessarily mean that citizens worship the nation blindly. Whenever the flag is flown, it is done so by citizens with conflicting views of the nation-state and thier outlook for the future. Jewish orthodox and secular, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, hawks and doves all fly the same flag. It is precisely the symbolic unspecificity of the flag that allows different groups to identity with it (Eriksen & Jenkins 2007:3). During national celebrations, citizens with conflicting views wave the flag, willingly transforming the mass-produced flag into their own personal allegiance, tacitly embracing the nation's symbolic image.

I was invited by Eran and his midde-class friends to an outdoor barbecue (*mangal*) a popular Independence Day activity.[68] Eran had brought collapsible chairs for his friends and a large Israeli flag was planted outside the camping tent. The impression was of young men and women who had learned to observe the national holidays with state-required respect. Some of the men from the group said that it was important to celebrate this day, particularly since they considered the Israel/Lebanon war in 2006 a military failure. They had been called to active combat and while they were currently waiting and preparing in the reserves for the next war they thought it was critical to demonstrate support for the Jewish state. Eran passionately articulated his love and loyalty to his homeland.

> I am proud of being Israeli, and I will fight to protect my country. This is our country, we love it and we are proud of it. I think everyone should show that they are happy for the country.

The multivocality of flags is evident, but so are their excluding and boundary-making qualities (Eriksen & Jenkins 2007). For Palestinians, Israel's independence was their catastrophe. There is no place for Arab citizens of Israel who are not in the IDF to talk about their loss and sacrifice in traditional ceremonies that emphasise Jewish Israeli suffering. Not surprisingly, no Israeli flags were fluttering from the antennas of cars in Arab towns or neighbourhoods.[69] When I shared my plans about going to an Arabic village for a commemoration ceremony of al-Nakba, one of the young men at the barbecue uttered "are you against Israel"? It seemed like even mentioning the existence of another and parallel history not only challenged the 'collective amnesia' but was also considered to be a disloyal act. Performing national unity through their participation in

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[68] The term *mangal* was traditionally used to refer to barbercues amongst Mizrahim and connoted low culture. In contrast the Asheknazi BBQ was termed *bar ba kiyu*, and held suburban Amercian connotations. With the 1990s Mizrahization of Israeli popular culture, *mangal* came to be the commonly used term for barbecues.

[69] The annual day of commemoration for the Palestinian people of the anniversary of the destruction of their towns and villages and their expulsion from Palestine is held on 15th May. The Israeli Independence Day is celebrated with the fifth day of the Jewish month of Iyar. The Jewish calendar is a combination of the lunar and Gregorian calendars. As a result of the fluctuating discrepancies between the Gregorian and Jewish calendars, sometimes there may be a gap as long as twe weeks between the two events.

the celebration seemed particularly important on these days structured around the state's symbolic display of national destruction and rebirth.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how Hebrew language studios and public state events promoted a singular vision of the Israeli nation as socially and morally united. Hebrew education and state events appealed to Jewish historiography, calendar and symbols to install and nurture love and loyalty for the Jewish nation-state. They appropriated Jewish tradition and symbols, drawing out long invented strands of continuousness between the present and the past to nurture a patriotic national catharsis and national belonging. The state-sponsored ulpan in a border town glorified for its steadfastness, seemed less open to negotiation and personal agency than in the centre. The ulpan in Kiryat Shemona tried to socialise the students to become loyal Israelis through the teaching of patriotic songs, historic events and about persons of Jewish importance. Students were promised that if they improved their Hebrew, they would become Israelis and be able to take part in a bright Israeli future. The teachers encouraged all students, including non-Jews, to express political identification with the State of Israel based on a Western and Eurocentric model of Israeliness built around the estrangement of Arabs and non-Jewish citizens. As such, there were clear continuites between Zionist historical and contemporary colonial practices that have worked to demote and marginalised Arab culture as a threat to national unity. Arab and Russian students fashioned themselves as loyal western national subjects, partly to position themselves on the ethnocratic hierarchy of belonging. The Arabs could only go beyond these boundaries by demonstrating their love and loyalty or through military sacrifice.

Although the ulpan and state events presented a coherent message of the harmonic integration of a complex heterogeneity of identities, the multicultural character of Israeli society challenges this view. When nationalist myths and symbols were at odds with lived reality, individuals questioned their content, message and purpose. We have seen how a few Israelis from a variety of backgrounds actively embraced, rejected or reworked the official state message of a nation with a single will and purpose. Some embraced the curriculum and events enthusiastically, some out of habit, and others exhibited a noticeable measure of indifference and apathy. This shows how a nationalist message can produced a complex of contradicting stances. The

promotion of western Israeliness and anti-Arab intolerance in the ulpan and military sacrifice and loyalty in state events, suggests that the crux of political culture in contemporary Israel is perhaps not so much about being a Jewish Sate in religious terms, but being a 'non-Arab state'. By itself, the ethno-national ideology, which is one of the manifistations of immigrant-settler societies, maintains its supremacy. The next two chapters will explore how the Euro-civilisational discourse promoted in the ulpan and elsewhere set the terms for the distinction of cultural otherness and self-identification in Kiryat Shemona.

Chapter 3

Civilised Persians and cold Ashkenazim: Negotiating the ethno-racial hierarchy

Peripheral nationhood does not only entail negotiation of national belonging amongst ordinary women and men at the margins of the state, but also relate to the ambiguities involved in people's ethno-cultural affiliatons. This chapter introduces the two main families highlighted in this thesis: the Chackotays and the Zakays, and explores how they identified with ethnic categories in which they were classified by dominant society and scholarship. The family members were not only entrapped by nationalist ideology, but they actively renegotiated their position in the ethnocracy in which their lives were entangled. The many non-nationalist self- and other-identifications in town demonastated that the nation was not a relevant category in all situations. Through stereotypes, ethnicised categorisation and joking, they distanced themselves from the negative image of border-Mizrahim that circulated in the Israeli public in order to enhance their own social status and self-image. However, the ethno-racial categories were often intrinsic to the ethnocracy, thus paradoxically reinforced Zionist ethnic hierarchies.

Mizrahi as a category of analysis and category of practice

While macro-studies have productively probed the social construction and effects of policies, they have been characterised by what Brubaker defines as *groupism* where a bounded group has been the fundamental analytical unit (1996:2).[70] As a consequence Mizrahim have been presented as singular actors with little agency (beyond the collective political appropriation of the Mizrahi label) to negotiate the meaning attached to the categories ascribed to them by dominant society.

Categories of ethnic belonging exist in discourse and one should not assume that they necessarily so exist on the ground. Brubaker argues that studying ethnicity and

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[70] Writing from a neo-Marxist approach Swirski treats the "oriental majority" as one homogenous group (Swirski 1989). As with the substantialist and realist understanding of nationalism, the subject disappears. His groupist account ignores the various socio-economic backgrounds of Mizrahim as well as cultural differences between Mizahim and Ashkenazim

nationalism from below, the focus should not be the 'groupness' of nationalism and ethnicity, but what social actors *do* with nationalist and ethnicised categories. While ethnicity is a social and political distinction, it is made and sustained by individual agency and has to be explored and unpacked in place, in the political and social contexts in which it occurs (Knowles 2003:48). This approach can allow for more refined social differences to become apparent and move beyond the rather crude divisions, which have informed much work of scholars of Israeli ethnicity.[71]

Mizrahim on the margins

Mizrahim in contemporary Israel differ considerably among themselves in their rates of mobility and class position. More than a third of Israelis classified as Mizrahim belong socio-economically to the Israeli middle class, and have been more or less assimilated into the mainstream of Ashkenazi dominated society through a dual process of de-Arabisation and Westernisation (Shoat 1989:54). Despite social mobility in Israel, most Mizrahim in the peripheral areas of Israel continue to occupy the lower strata of the Israeli social ladder. Sociological research shows that there is still an extensive overlap between ethnic background and socio-economic position that cut across generations (Smooha 1993:7). Gaps between Israeli-born second generation Ashkenazim and Mizrahim have not decreased over the past thirty years. Mizrahim only make up a quarter of the students in the universities and are still significantly underrepresented in the political and non-political elites (Khazzom 2005:2649).

These gaps are particulary distinct in development towns where Israeli planning policies in the Galilee regions have served to consolidate economic gaps between Arab and Jews, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim (Schellekens &Anson 2007:159). The neo-liberal transformation of the Israeli economy has had a serious impact on the growing inequalities between the core and the periphery in Israel. The traditional spatial pattern of economic activity is disappearing from the realm of national planning and is being

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[71] Zfadia & Yiftachel (2008) have recognized the absence of "the other side" in the scholarly Mizrahi debate, namely voices from the Mizrahi ethno-class. They conducted a survey amongst Mizrahim in six peripheral development towns, three in the north and three in the south. Their attitudinal questionnaire gave a useful and general overview of the national sensibilities, feelings of place, identity and position in Israeli society. However, a survey is less suited to capture the nuances of ethnicity in a moving sense of place and social landscape (Knowles 2003:42). It cannot properly show how the interviewees articulated their own emotions or negotiated the boundaries of the collective.

left to the market economy, marginalising the Mizrahim even further (Nitzan & Bichler 2002:27). A geographical analysis of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data from 2008 shows that the main subjects of socio-economic gaps live in the peripheral areas and that the socio-economic divide between the centre and the periphery is growing. Most of Israel's Ashkenazi population still reside in the central urban areas relatively remote from the development towns. In 2004, the Galilee region accommodated 680,000 residents, of which 72 percent were Arab, 21 percent residents of development towns and 9 percent residents of rural and exurban kibbutzim, moshavim and mitzpim. Mizrahim in development town make up 18 per cent of the Israeli population, of which about two- thirds are of Mizrahi origin, and the remaining are predominatnely migrants from the former Soviet Union or even less from Ethiopia (Yiftachel 2004).

In a immigrant-settler society such as Israel the ideological and material connections between state and land are maintained. The state holds a monopoly over land and planning and grants better conditions to actors who are ideologically identified with the state's interests (Tzfadia 2011:42). The development towns get allocated less financial resources than Jewish settlements colonsing the West Bank. The perceived contribution to nation-building is also evident in the northern industrial zone, where the Kibbutzim have gotten more and better land allocated to them than in Kiryat Shemona. Kiryat Shemona, has 14,000 dunams of land (a dunam is a thousand square meters) and the surrounding area, which belong to the region's kibbutzim has a total of 270,000 dunams. The state has offered economic incentives and tax benefits for the establishment of factories in the periphery. About 50 manufacturing plants of various sizes are located directly around the town or its surroundings as part of two large industrial zones. The industrial zone does not belong to the Kiryat Shemona municipality but to the Upper Galilee regional council. Farmland transformed for retail use attracts factories that pay taxes to the leaseholders, the kibbutzim. According to a survey conducted by Oren Yiftachel in four development towns structurally similar to Kiryat Shemona the majority of residents found the state's policy towards the towns discriminatory, particularly in comparison to the state's treatment of nearby kibbutzim (Yiftachel 2006:218).[72]

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[72] The survey was conducted in Shlomi, Beit Shean, Ofakim and Maalot-Tarshiha.

The cost of living in Israel's periphery is higher than that in the center due to the distance that results in high transportation and travel costs. Neo-liberal reforms of the *Histadrut* (the Jewish Federation of Labour) starting in the late 1980s have weakened organised labour, and the development towns have lost several tax benefits and social services previously provided by the state. Several factories, particularly in the textile industry, have been closed down or outsourced to countries like Egypt and Jordan where labour is cheaper. Mizrahi blue-collar workers were more likely to loose their jobs than higher educated Ashkenazim. Other factories also hired semi-legal workers from countries ranging from the Philippines to Romania, who earn even less than Mizrahi blue-collar workers. The class system and the ethnic division of labour, combined with place, are thus central factors in the Mizrahi experience, particularly in the development towns where the unemployment rate is high and economic problems severe (Nitzan & Bichler 2002:27). Although the Ashkenazi establishment succeeded in assimilating most Mizrahim into Israeli nationality, it also deepened their sense of subjugation to Ashkenazi discrimination (Massad 1996: 76). The public's image of the development towns as marginal and stigmatised places also serve to hinder mobility and development (Yiftachel 2006:220). Negative migration from Kiryat Shemona means that the town has a long way to go before it reaches the population of forty thousand that is a requirement for external investment (Shabi 2009:166).

The CBS data does not reveal socio-economic disparities among Mizrahim themselves in the development towns. A sure avenu to gain entrance or maintain membership in the Israeli middle class is through a salaried job with benefits. Hoever, many Mizrahim enter the middle class through independendt small business ownership, thus avoiding job interviews and application screening by an Ashkenazi, or by a Mizrahi who has undergone Ashkenazification. Some of my informants had attained middle class status through their own small business.

In Kiryat Shemona, the main source of employment is still in manufacturing and labour-intensive industries or in the security apparatus. The town also serves as a commercial centre for the surrounding communities and some residents are self-employed in small businesses. Central Bureau of Statistics data from 2008 reveals that while the mean national monthly income was 8,000 NIS, the average wage in Kiryat Shemona was 5,300 NIS. The average wage was lower than the national average for both the self-employed and the salaried employee. The unemployment rate was also higher than the national average. According to CBS estimates, 5,400 residents in Kiryat

Shemona were living on unemployment benefits, welfare or disability pensions in 2008, double the national average. A ranking of Israeli local authorities from 2008 based on social and economic parameters of residents, ranked Kiryat Shemona fifth out of ten categories.[73] This was above Arab authorities, yet in a low position compared to other Jewish local authorities (CBS 2008, accessed 16th December 2011). The percentage of students aged 20-29 was 30 percent lower than the Israeli average (Tzfadia 2008:6). The socio-economic situation of the residents thus shows how the concept of a Mizrahi ethno-class has analytical value at the macro-level if not used as a category of identification by all residents on the ground. Similar ethno-class fissures that characterise settler societies can be found in virtually all contemporary societies which involve encounters between indigenous and migrant groups.

Ethno-racial stereotyping and joking amongst the Chackotay family

The need to construct stereotypes is related to the way in which individuals apply standardised templates for making sense of social objects (Brubaker 2006:73). Employing Derrida's concept of difference, which plays on differences as dissimilarity and difference as deferral of meaning and closure, Homi Bhabha argues that:

> The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference…constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in the significations of psychic and social relations (1996:98).

The effectiveness of the stereotype derives from the wish for a fixed relationship between the signifier and the signified. Since the signifiers keeps shifting, the stereotypes need to be continuously repeated to make them appear as a 'natural' way of making sense of one's own and others' background and being. The following shows how ethno-racial categories and stereotypes were used in differentiation and symbolisation in everyday life, both reinforcing and challenging the ethnocracy.

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[73] The figure might be lower. Two thousand students from the Tel-Hai Academic College have registered as living in KS to get benefits, which impacts the 'education' part of the index. However, the majority leaves once they have graduated.

Benny and Revital Chackotay are a Persian-Jewish married couple in their mid-sixties. As managers of their own store, they had an above-average income by local standards. The Chackotay couple had financed their children's education in the centre, where three out of four children had moved. Their youngest son, Tal, was enrolled at the local *Yeshivat Hesder,* combining military service with Torah studies. Their only daughter Keren, her Ashkenazi husband and one-year-old son Hillel lived in Kiryat Shemona temporarily after just having finished their engineering degrees at *Technion* in Haifa. While Benny and Revital had contributed financially to the social mobility of their children, they rarely left town. They were busy with managing their appliance and giftware store named *Kol-Bo-Tal.* Kol bo means "everything is in it", and that was true for the eclectic mix of items you could find in their store: from textiles and kitchen utensils, to synagogue and liturgical items.[74] All members of the extended family viewed themselves as strong Zionists and religious nationalists, accepting the inseparability of Jewishness and Israeliness, between religious and national identities.

The melting-pot ideology that denies the importance of intra-Jewish ethnicity has clearly failed. Judaism may be considered the most important historical focus of Jewish unity, but in Israeli society, different orientations towards religious tradition as well as subcultural religious differences such as specific religious customs, festivals, and prayer styles, are important components of the ethnic difference among the Israeli-Jewish population (Ben-Rafael and Sharot 1991:23). The synagogues represent the clearest expression of Jewish ethnic pluralism and Kiryat Shemona contained approximately 40 ethnic synagogues based on country of origin. For Sephardim and Ashkenazim, the religious texts of the Torah and the Talmud are word for word the same, but in ritual and sequencing there are certain differences (Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006:245).[75]

Revital and Benny attended services in the Sephardic synagogue, whose members were of all ages and backgrounds. Benny occasionally led the prayer, a respected and prestigious role. He was greatly concerned by the perceived weakening of religiosity among Sephardic Jews and believed that the local community had been

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[74] *Kol bo* is the mainstream Hebrew term for a small department store that sells everything from food to clothes to small electrical appliances. Like many Hebrew words, it does have its Biblical origins, but has become more secularized as Hebrew itself has become more secular.

[75] Ashkenazim and Sephardim have different *siddurim* (prayer books) and Torah services. All days except Rosh Hashanah the Sephardim pray longer than the Ashkenazim. During Rosh Hashanah the roles are reversed. The Ashkenazim pray three hours longer and they also sing the *tfila (prayer),* whereas the Sephardim read more.

severely damaged by "secular malaise". Secular Jews were giving up their Jewish identity by ignoring history and religious beliefs. Revital believed in the mystical powers of cabbalistic passages, in spirits and the healing effects of herbal infusions. She attributed sickness and personal injury to jealousy's evil eye and she had decorated their shop and home with amulets and *hamsot (hands)* to protect the family from baleful spirits. Although their store specialised in religious items, it was frequented by customers with diverse backgrounds. A steady flow of customers came not only to purchase but to chat, socialise and exchange the latest news. My impression was that this hard-working couple was 'well-liked' and respected in town.

In one situation, I witnessed tension among members of the Chackotay family that stemmed from different ethnic religious practices. During the Rosh Hashanah dinner, the Chakotay family members discussed what synagogue to attend for morning prayers because the parents, their children and their children's spouses all had differing opinions. Should they go to the Sephardic or Ashkenazi synagogue? Keren insisted on the Sephardic synagogue, as she had been attending an Ashkenazi for the last couple of years as a student in Haifa. Oshri, Karen's Ashkenazi husband complained loudly that he hardly understood anything of the *tfila* (prayer) in the Moroccan synagogue. He described it as "a different religion". The next day, I met Revital outside their house in Trumpeldor Street.[76] After a loud discussion in the middle of the street with her daughter and son-in-law about which synagogue to attend, they finally agreed to go to the Ashkenazi synagogue.

The Ashkenazi synagogue, a small building with about 80 seats, was situated on the outskirts of the Park *Zahav* (Park of Gold). The predominantly Ashkenazi crowd was dressed in light colours, women and men prayed separately, divided by a thin wall. The rows of seats faced the Ark rather than surrounding it as is common in Sephardic synagogues. The men were rocking on their heels and murmuring as they echoed the rabbi's singing prayers. I was used to seeing Revital cheerful and confident greeting women in the back of the Sephardic synagogue but that day she was quiet and reserved as if she felt alienated from the Ashkenazi service. She clearly felt more comfortable in a Sephardic synagogue and places where *Mizrahiut* (Easterness) was maintained. Although Revital preferred to attend a Sephardic Yom Kippur service, she was willing to compromise to please her children and their Ashkenazi partners.

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[76] The street is named after the one-armed national hero and pioneer-settler Joseph Trumpeldor who fell in the battle of Tel-Hai in 1920, north of the Arab village of Khalsa.

Outside the religious domain of synagogues and the occasional reference to Mizrahi cuisine, Benny and Revital Chackotay avoided labelling themselves as Mizrahi and rather identified themselves with Persia and its particular traditions and practices. Indeed, I was struck by the family's effort to distance themselves from the category altogether. The category still connotes lower economic status and might explain why themes of ethnicity are ambiguous and sometimes painful to discuss. The Chackotay family, who successfully climbed the social ladder with their children into the middle class, thus distanced themselves from the category.[77] The avoidance of the category reflects the ambivalence of relating to a classificatory term traditionally used by Ashkenazi settlers as a colonial practice to control and racialise Jews with non-European pasts.
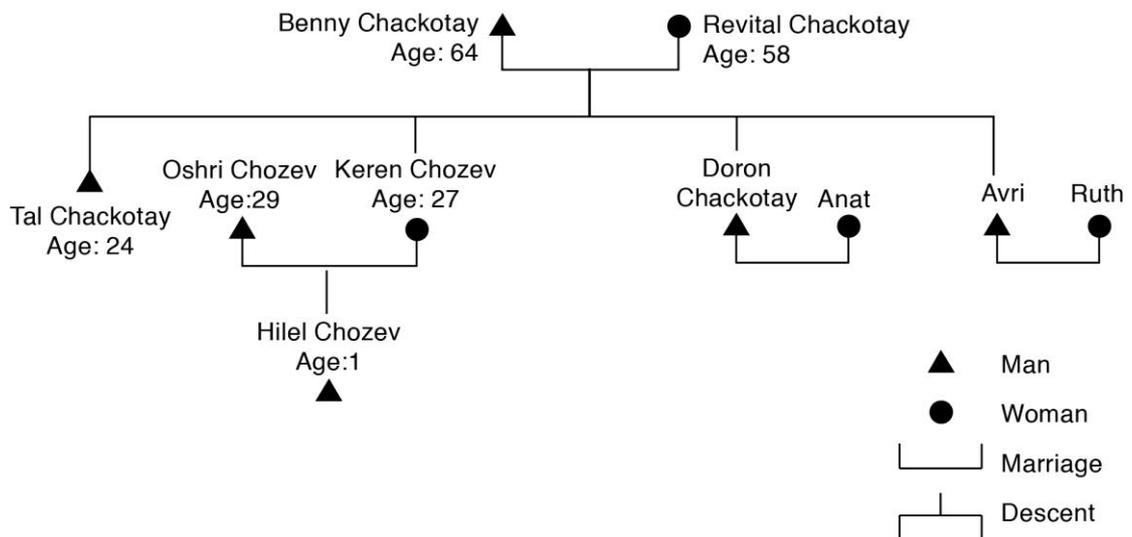
Figure 9. Family tree for the Chackotay family.

I was invited to celebrate *Sukkot*[78] with the Chackotay family. It is a *mitzvah* (commandment) to be hospitable during Sukkot and I felt that my presence was particularly welcomed this evening. Their business had gone well the week leading up to Sukkot and they had sold more than 120 etrogim (a lemon-like fruit over which blessings are said during Sukkot). All their children, along with their spouses and children, were visiting for the holiday. The men and children went to prayers in the

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[77] The majority of Mizrahi scholars studying Mizrahim have rejected the negative connotations of the label and adopted Mizrah as a source of identification. However, this minority of activists does not represent the vast majority of Mizrahim.
[78] *Sukkot* is celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei (late September to late October).

Moroccan synagogue, while the women decorated the *sukkah*[79], a temporary hut, with bamboo-sticks, autumnal fruits, Judaic themes and a row of blue stars of David.

Revital was in a cheerful mood preparing dinner for the festive occasion in the kitchen. While cutting vegetables she emphasised how Persian food tasted better and was healthier than both Moroccan and Iraqi food. During dinner the atmosphere was festive and humorous. Benny was full of praise for his wife's culinary creations as Revital placed yet another dish on the table.

Figure 10. The Chackotay family *sukkah*.

Benny and Revital's oldest son Doron, visited from Haifa with his Ashkenazi wife Anat and their three children. Like the other orthodox Jewish male members of the family he wore a knitted *kippah.* Anat covered her hair under a brown wig and wore a dress with sleeves below the elbow, the common custom for orthodox Jewish married women fulfilling the commandment of modesty. She was of Polish decent and Revital reverted to a stereotype in reffering to her daughter-in-law as Ashkenazi.

During dinner she uttered: "Look at you, Anat, you are eating like an Ashkenazi!" implying that she was being self-restrained and not appreciating the large meals of Mizrahi families. Anat smilingly accepted the description but then revealed the

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[79] The *halakha* (Jewish religious law) says that all meals and sleeping should occur in the *sukkah*.

fact that Benny and Revital are cousins. "Their fathers were brothers! That's why their children are a bit *koko…"* she laughed wholeheartedly. Revital instantly responded the until now hidden and perhaps stigmatised fact of parallel cousin marriage by defensively waving her hand in front of her while she somewhat embarrassingly said: "The Ashkenazim would have gotten strange children but we *Parsim* (Iranians) have strong genes." Avri, the next eldest son in the family raised his voice: "My wife is Moroccan. She is primitive, so I married her and made her cultured!" He lent back in his chair contently and his wife laughed at his joke and replied in a loud voice: "There is no smoke without fire. Take Anat for instance. She is from Poland and you know what they say about the Polish...that they are cold, and that is true!" At this point everyone around the table burst out laughtering.

At another family gathering, Revital made an explicit comment about her grandson Hilel who had an Ashkenazi father. Immediately after Benny had recited the *kiddush* (sanctification) over the wine, Hilel started to cry. Revital calmed him down, whereby he stopped crying. She shouted out in a loud voice clapping her hands together; "You, see! He is a real *Ashkenazi*!" She laughed and pointed towards her daughter Keren. "She used to be calm when she was a child. Just like an Ashkenazi. She likes rules and having organised surroundings. No wonder she married a *yekke*."[80]

She then turned to her grandson Hillel who was crawling towards the dinner table and mumbled: "He has a nice skin colour…I mean, what if he had turned out darker…" Revital asked me whether I preferred "chocolate" or "milk", i.e., dark or white skin. Somewhat struck by the question, I replied that I found both beautiful. Benny seemed embarrassed by his wife's explicit reference to skin colour and quickly said "that is not important." These statements show that the family members were acutely aware of and central actors in race-making themselves, during the ordinary activities of everday life.

Despite being surrounded by neighbours of Moroccan Jewish background and having a Moroccan daughter-in-law, Revital jokingly stated negative characteristics of Moroccans on several occasions. At the Jewish-Moroccan festival of *Mimuna* marking the end of Passover, I was sitting in her living room when an elderly Moroccan neighbour, wearing a traditional costume and jewellery-embroidered headscarf, visited

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[80] German Jews are called "YEKKE-s" or "YEKKIM" (plural, Hebrew) an acronym for the phrase, "Yehudi Kshe Havana" (literally translated as "Jews who don't get it"). Culturally translated, the acronym means "Jews who do not understand how to scheme."

unannounced.[81] Revital showed the expected hospitality, offering her guest tea and serving it in small hourglass-shaped cups, as was the Persian custom. Just after Revital had closed the door behind her neighbour, she turned to me and said slightly irritated: "You see, the Moroccans, they are so impulsive and emotional *(regishot)*!" She reinforced the stereotype that Moroccans were unpredictable and emotional, and as if to distance herself from them further, emphasised that *Mimuna* was a Moroccan and not a Persian festival. To prevent "stigma by proxy" in Erving Goffman'a terms, Revital distanced herself from those seen to be more eastern.

These ethnographic vignettes are quite characteristic of the habitual joking and stereotypical descriptions of intra-Jewish ethnicised categories. Joking both in private and public can lift the bar on taboos and sometimes stigmatised identities, but they can also reproduce ethnic stereotypes and prejudice (Van Dijk in Lefkowitz 2001:179). Although the stereotyping around the dinner table was done humorously almost as a kind of game, it had the effect of reinforcing and strengthening the discursive character of ethnicity (Brubaker 2006:218).

The members of the Chackotay family reinforced stereotypical concepts of ethnicity that largely corresponded to the ethnic hierarchy found in Zionist ideology. They differentiated themselves and Persian Jews from other Mizrahim by drawing attention to the differences in socio-economic status, educational attainment and personality. Failings or 'uncivilised' behaviour such as impulsiveness, uncontrolled temper and primitivism were associated with the imagined and stereotypical cultural characteristics of Moroccan others in particular. Equally, civilised behaviour was associated with the stereotypically appropriate behaviour of Persians and orthodox Ashkenazim.

Several of their children had gone onto higher education, lived in the centre and moved in social circles where the Ashkenazim were numerically dominant. Their mobility in the ethnic hierarchy through education and intermarriage with Ashkenazim made the Mizrahi category less relevant. By associating themselves with Ashkenazi hegemony, they seemed to be trying to re-define creatively the basis upon which they were judged. They used positive stereotypes to challenge the position of their *edah* in

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[81] The Moroccan Jewish Celebration of *Mimunah* has been revitalised in Israel. It has become essential for every Ashkenazi prime minister or aspiring politician to participate in the celebration of this "Mizrahi" festive event. On this occasion, the media is full of reports of Ashkenazi politicians visiting Mizrahi homes and tasting the traditional bread (*mofleta)* baked by the women of the household.

the ethnocracy. These categorisations and negotiations of status, although related to Zionist ethnic hierarchy, reflect situations in which nationhood was not a pervasively relevat social category. The many self- and other-identifications that were not nationalist, challenge Billig's theory of nationalism that considers nationalism to be omnipresent.

Introducing the Zakay family
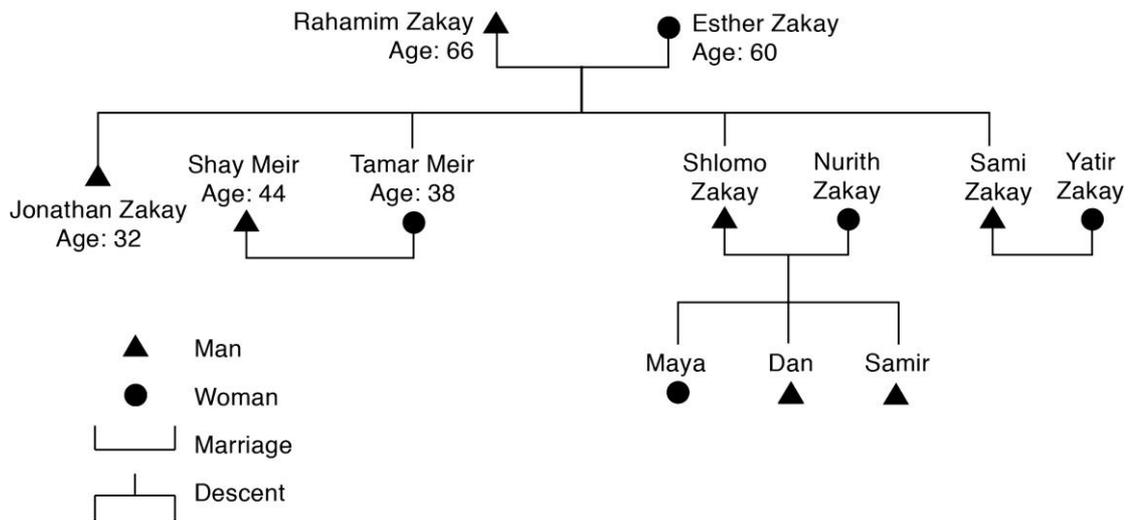
Figure 11. Family tree for the Zakay family.

I first met the Zakay family at the very beginning of fieldwork in July 2008. Esther and Rahamim lived a five-minute walk from the town centre, and I rented their small basement flat. Rahamim had retired early for health reasons, and spent his days frequenting local cafes to meet friends, drink coffee and play *towli* (backgammon). He did not consider himself particularly religious but *masoriti* (traditional).[82] Rahamim always wore a neatly pressed blue shirt, khaki trousers and leather sandals and *kippah* for Shabbat and the occasional visit to his local synagogue. Before entering a room, he

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[82] The latest Guttman Report (Levy, Levinshohn and Katz 2002) found that 50 percent of all Mizrahim self-identify as masoriti whereas only 19 percent of Ashkenazim self-identify as such.

habitually touched the silver mezuzah to the right of the door. [83] He was a keen football fan and attended matches at the football stadium to support the local team he considered to represent the town's "pride and culture". Although frequently complaining about financial restraints, Rahamim and Esther invested a lot of time and resources in their two-story yellow concrete house. The house had a long garden with a vegetable patch at the back and a homemade birdcage adorned with patriotic blue and white flags housing five parrots. Rahamim had decorated the building and garden with colourful ornaments crafted out of metal and glass that he made himself. Framed mirrors, a large mermaid, a Star of David and a dozen colourful *mezuzot* on the doorways of the house made it a local attraction.

The life history of Esther Zakay illuminates the inseparable connection between socio-economic and emotional landscapes and how they produce and sustain each other. Esther was born in Teheran in 1949. She lived with her parents, four brothers and three sisters in a sizeable house "not much unlike a *hamola*" (extended family structure). Her father bribed an army officer so that his sons would be exempt

from serving in the Iranian army. The army authorities called him in and an officer wrote a number on his arm stating the date for his execution. "The number was similar to the numbers the Jews were marked with during the *Shoa* (Holocaust)" Esther said, comparing the Iranian Jewish experience to the experiences of European Jews in concentration camps. Faced with the threat of execution for national disloyalty, the Zakay family decided to flee to the newly established Israeli nation-state. The family left all their belongings behind and asked neighbours to look after the house, not sharing their intention to stay in Israel for good. Successfully avoiding conscription, they made it to Israel when Esther was three years old. In the summer of 1952, they were sent to the immigrant absorption camp in Kiryat Shemona. At the age of seventeen, Esther married Rahamim Zakay, whose family came from the city of Arbil in Northern Iraq. They had four children, three boys and a girl, all of whom studied in Kiryat Shemona and went to the army.

After raising their children, Esther found work in a kibbutz nursery. During the 'good fence period' (*Geder HaTova*), she was employed by the Gibor textile factory in

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[83] A mezuzah is a piece of parchment inscribed with specified Hebrew verses from the Torah. Traditional Jews touch the mezuzah with their hand when entering or leaving a room.

Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon and was responsible for the Lebanese female workers commuting from Southern Lebanon. This period began when Israel opened the border fence in the Israeli town of Metula, north of Kiryat Shemona in July 1976, and Lebanese workers began receiving work permits to work in northern Israel. From the sealed border of early 1976, relations warmed considerably. Lebanese citizens who had relatives in Israel were allowed to visit them and commercial ties between Israel and Lebanon were established.

Esther had fond memories from this period and talked warmly about her Lebanese colleagues. The women arrived in four buses every morning. Some of them spoke French, English and Arabic and they communicated in a mixture of simple vocabulary in Arabic and Hebrew. The workers were not allowed to bring goods in from Lebanon but Esther sometimes brought them bread from Kiryat Shemona, as it was cheaper. The 'good fence period' ended with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on 6th June 1982, in the military operation "Peace in the Galilee". The northern border was closed and Esther was employed in the kitchen of a nearby kibbutz that offered her a higher salary than in the factory. Esther had few pleasant memories from the time she worked in the Kibbutz. The kibbutznikim (plural for someone from a kibbutz) looked down upon the inhabitants of Kiryat Shemona. "I remember when I used to work in the kitchen of Kibbutz HaGoshrim, they asked us to work all the time, and we were not even allowed to take a break. What is this? Work all day, without a break?" Esther said upsettingly. When I asked whether she thought that the relationship was better today than it used to be, she promptly replied:

> It is worse! They are even nastier today. They still have their noses in the air. But now the kibbutznikim are also facing difficult times due to the economic crisis. Finally they also have to work as we have done our entire life. Finally they also feel what I have felt.

Esther's dismissive attitude towards the Ashkenazim and sometimes, her hostility, reflects the wide ethno-class disparity that developed between the kibbutzim settlements and development towns. None of the members of the Zakay family had Ashkenazi spouses or close friends. This might in part account for why being Ashkenazi was more frequently sited as a negative characteristic than in the Chackotay family where several members had intermarried.

The kibbutz structure used to be racist because Mizrahim and other peripheral minorites were excluded. In some Mizrahi circles, *kibbutznik* is shorthand for a racist (Shabi 2009:158). Although Esther disliked the kibbutznikim strongly, verging on resentment, two of her sons had moved to a nearby kibbutz to raise their families in a "better environment". The original kibbutz structure was that of a collective community based on agriculture. In the last decades, most kibbutzim have become privatised and no longer practice such communal living. Once considered the elite group of Israeli society, they are today perceived to be more closely aligned to the development towns, although the economic dependence between the towns and the neighbouring kibbutzim still generates resentment (Tzafadia 2007:99).

The breakdown of the original socialist structure of the kibbutzim and the decline in their status has brought the kibbutzim and Kiryat Shemona closer in economic terms.[84] Special neighbourhoods in kibbutzim have been constructed allowing non-members and outsiders to rent housing. The acceptance of outsiders into a radically changed kibbutz structure seems to have changed attitudes among younger generations towards the kibbutzim.

Esther and Rahamim's attitude towards Ashkenazim surfaced during a discussion surrounding their children's weddings. The first month I stayed in Kiryat Shemona Esther and Rahamim's youngest son got married to a local girl whose Moroccan-born parents were veterans of the town. The traditional wedding ceremony was held in a Sephardic synagogue with hundreds of guests. Going through the wedding photos a couple of weeks later, I asked Rahamim what he would have felt if one of his sons had married an Ashkenazi woman. "I would have had a bit of trouble with that idea. *HaMentaliot shonot* (the mentality is different)", he claimed. At this point, Esther quickly interrupted her husband. "That is not true. I would not have a problem with that. Love is enough. And that she is Israeli."[85] As with Benny's embarrassment over Revital's references to skin colour, Esther seemed uncomfortable about her husband admitting a preference for Mizrahi spouses.

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[84] In 2009, the Mayor of Kiryat Shemona, Nissim Malka and the head of the Upper Galilee regional council, Aharon Valency, agreed that the two authorities should cooperate on issues such as recycling and regional youth leadership in order to bring down the wall that had separated them historically (Haaretz 20/01/12).

[85] Esther would use the term Israeli interchangeably with Jewish. When Israeli Jews refer to their "Israeli identification", they are usually referring to their commonality with other Jewish citizens of Israel and not to the legal notion of citizen which they share with non-Jews (Ben-Rafael & Porat 1991:239).

Until recently, the only member of the Zakay family practicing religion and wearing *kippah* on a daily basis was their oldest son. However, a year ago their only daughter had *hazara be-tshuva (*penitence), embracing a strictly orthodox religious lifestyle. Her return to religion came after a decade being employed by a high-tech firm travelling the world. The only trip Esther had ever made abroad was to the former Yugoslavia, accompanying her daughter on a three-day business trip. Esther and Rahamim often told stories from their daughter's previous middle-class life-style and sometimes they screened pictures on their computer from her travels. It seemed as if they longed for the opportunities and the increase in status their daughter's abandoned career had given them. Esther complained that she had to make an extra effort to satisfy their daughter's strict *Halakha* (Jewish religious law) lifestyle. In addition, she was deeply worried that at the age of thirty-eight she was still not married. While Esther previously had said that she would not mind if her daughter found an Ashkenazi man, her view changed the following month. Her daughter Tamar had been proposed to by an Ashkenazi man but she was unconvinced whether he was the right man to marry. Esther shared her stereotypical characteristic of Ashkenazim:

> Both his parents are lawyers from Poland. They are very cold people. They don't like big families, many children or the joys of life. All they think about is work and money. They don't like spending time with the family. We are together at least every Friday, sometimes Saturdays as well. We like loud music and big families, but the Ashkenazim don't like joy. They are always cold and serious.

Esther portrayed the Ashkenazim as emotionally cold and alienated from traditional family values and more career-oriented. This rather negative sterotypcial description of potential in-laws were atypcial. There is a typical Hebrew saying that describes a marriage enagments into a dual-income, professional Ashkenazi family is like "winning the lottery". Esther did not tell me the reason for why Tamar and the wealthier Ashkeanzi man did not marry. However, her invocation of classical sterotypes towards Asheknazim was perhaps used to comfort herself after another, yet failed attempt, to regain some financial status and standing.

Racialisation and discrimination

Although Esther felt resentment towards Ashkenazi "snobbishness" based on a long history of felt inferiority, particularly in work contexts, she was very concerned with presenting her grandchildren as European-looking. As in the Chackotay family, racialisation occurred routinely. The Zakay family often gathered for Shabbat dinners or picnics next to the Jordan River. Esther's eldest son was married to a Moroccan woman but in contrast to other family members, their children were blond, a fact Esther had stressed on several occasions as she showed me family photographs. Once more, at a family gathering she admiringly emphasised how her two grandchildren looked European in contrast to the rest of the family members. She was also curious to know whether all Norwegians were blond, clearly stereotyping my 'Scandinavian' looks. Looking at another family photo I told Jonathan, the youngest son in the family, that he resembled his sister Tamar and he jokingly replied: "You mean that I am *shachor* (black) like her!"

Jonathan was aware of the derogatory term black as an ethno-racial construction and used it jokingly in self-description. Israeli nation-building has fused racism with orientalism. Over generations, both Arabs and Mizrahim have suffered under a dual oppression racialised by Ashkenazim as both black, oriental and eastern with non-European pasts.[86] The anthropologist Raphael Patai catalogued the ethnic stereotypes associated with Oriental Jews in the early 1950s and made a list of traits: "Instability, emotionalism, impulsiveness, unreliability, incompetence, habitual lying, cheating, laziness, boastfulness, inclination to violence, uncontrolled temper, supersititousness, childishness, lack of cleanliness" (Patai in Shabi 2011:49). All these traits show how Mizrahim were orientalised as primitive and culturally inferior. By the 1970s, prejudice had become asymmetrical and Ashkenazim had greater negative attitudes towards Mizrahim than the reverse. Mizrahim also internalised the negative stereotyping of themselves (Smooha 1978:55).

Racialisaton of Mizrahim is not just a historical colonial practice but continues today. A wide range of demeaning ethno-racial stereotypes of Mizrahim circulate in Israeli public discourse and cultural production. A schoolbook recommended for nine-

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[86] It was this racial nickname that disenfranchised Mizrahim who appropriatedit as a tool of political empowerment in the 1970s when they named their group the Black Panthers, inspired by the African American movement of the same name (Zohar 2005:312).

year old children by Government authorities in 1997 has in it a story about "a dark and skinny Moroccan boy", who looks different from the other children and eats like a small bird. He comes from a land far, far away, and dwells in one room with his goats, and his Jewishness is in doubt (Jacob 1997:60).

The aspiration towards white western-ness is particularly evident in the Israeli advertising industry. Mizrahi actors in television commercials are frequently ascribed stereotypical traits of character as dumb, short-tempered and uneducated. Mizrahim often appear in advertising for products such as detergents or air conditioning, whereas models with distinctly European looks are used for more "intelligent" products (Dönmez-Colin 2007:2006). In the dominant racialised discourse, the Israeli of highest status is white and Ashkenazi-looking. It is not unusual for Mizrahim to be worried about being mistaken for Arabs or non-Jews and wear the Star of David around their necks for nationalist rather than religious motives. The representations of Mizrahiyut (Jewish Easterness) are shifting, contradictory and influenced by history. They do not only emerge from Ashkenazi-dominated society but circulate amongst Mizrahim themselves. My informants' frequent references to skin colour reflected the deep racialisation inherent in the Zionist ethnic hierarchy.

When I visited Esther's son Jonathan at his workplace in the community centre, he spontaneously made a comment about his own and his colleague's skin colour. "Look," he said pointing towards the other. "He is from Morocco but he still has blue eyes, pale skin and blond hair like you. I am *shachor* (*black)* in relation to him, although we both are Moroccans."[87] The joking invocation of the category of blackness show the profound internalisation of racialised categories that have been used by Ashkenazim to control both Palestinians and Mizrahim.

The local souk was open on Tuesdays and Thursdays and located a short distance from *rechov* David Shimoni where the Zakay couple and I lived. It was a shaded and cool market featuring alleyways of stalls packed with vegetables and fruit from the surrounding orchards, clothes and household merchandise. I frequently went shopping with Esther and benefited from her good bargaining skills. One afternoon we went to the souk looking for something appropriate for me to wear to her daughter's Tamar wedding which was being held the following month. It would be a strictly

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[87] Hebrew for black is *shachor* while white is *lavan.* The word lavan is not as frequently employed in social hierarchies in Israel as shachor. The implied racial opposite of shachor is Ashkenazi.

orthodox wedding and required a knee-length skirt and a top with sleeves covering the arms to below the elbow. Esther walked over to a rack of clothing and began rifling efficiently through it. She took a long blue dress off the hanger and asked a salesman to show it to us. The Mizrahi salesman sat alone on a wooden stool, his hands resting on his knees, looking tired as the souk was about to close. He turned to us while replying, slightly irritated: "It's not mine! It belongs to the *kushi* (nigger) over there!" He nodded in the direction of an Arab salesman who was packing up his merchandise. The racist slang word for Arab did not seem to register with Esther, who resolutely hurried to the other stall. I felt uncomfortable and frustrated witnessing such outright racism. That an Arab was racialised with the derogatory term *kushi* seemed to be a ingrained rhetorical habit. Mizrahim, who have been subjected to the same term, also used it in their description of Arabs, in order to emphasise this group's inferior position in the ethnocracy.

Several residents told me that they had been subjected to negative stereotyping and structured exclusion because of their ethnic background. A Mizrahi friend with Yemeni parents once asked me to enter a nightclub in front of him because he was not sure that he would be allowed entrance. In multicultural Israel, being a soldier does not guarantee the right to enter nightclubs if your skin colour is non-white. Racial discrimination is also concealed under the argument of culture. Jonathan Zakay said that he was discriminated against in the labour market when an Ashkenazi manager hired an Ashkenazi worker with lower qualifications. Later he explained that the exclusion had "some basis in different culture", implying that though he found it hurtful, he did not want to make an issue out of it. "After all, we are all Jews."

These examples show that my informants had suffered from colonial racism and exclusion inherent in the Zionist ethnic hierarchy that continues to influence their classification of self and others. However, these racialised negotiations and identifications, although influenced by the Zionist ethnic hierarchy, were not nationalist. The nation, although implicit, was not pervasive at all times and in all situations.

Challenging ethnic boundaries

In Israel, children and grandchildren of Mizrahim have dispersed throughout Israeli society, not least through intermarriage with people of Ashkenazi origin. Intermarriage

is challenging the boundaries of ethnic categories, but can be a sensitive issue (Schellekens & Anson 2007:148).

The Israeli film *Ahava Colombianit* (Colombian Love, 2006) dramatise Ashkenazi/Mizrahi clashes of cultures and generations. A young couple is planning their wedding, but not without complications. The parents of the bride are descendants of Hungarians and Russians while the groom's parents are Moroccan. The couple decides to have an informal wedding without convention of shaking the parents' hands at the entrance, which is the traditional Moroccan custom. The wedding DJ is instructed not to play any *Mizrahi* music. As a consequence, the father of the groom feels that his honour is insulted. "For us, family comes first", says the father in an emotional scene where he furiously demands his son to divorce the woman he has married an hour ago. After the confrontation with the father, the young couple decide to arrange a second ceremony, one that satisfies her father-in-law's wishes and reinstates his pride. The film demonstrates that although inter-marriage can be an emotional and cultural challenge, it can work with prosper respect and sensitivity.

Eran, a single Ashkenazi student at the University of Haifa expressed reluctant attitudes about Jewish ethnic inter-marriage. He was born and raised in a northern Kibbutz and thought his parents would object if he wanted to marry a Jewish girl of non-Western background.

> I think it is connected to values and land, and that we are so used to looking after each other. In my kibbutz there are only Ashkenazim who came from Germany, Poland and Russia, from more civilized countries. My family's neighbour in the kibbutz survived the camps and the torture of the Nazis. Some only speak Polish today. My grandmother came from Poland, and if you talk to her in Hebrew, she will most likely not understand. My grandparents on my father's side speak German. If I introduced a Yemeni or Ethiopian girl to my parents, my father would not appreciate that. I think it would be difficult for them to understand the culture and mentality of a Mizrahi family. They (Mizrahim) lived next to Arabs for many generations and they caught their habits. I know that he would grow to love her, but it would be a challenge initially. But of course this is changing.

From Eran's explanation, it seemed that he would most likely end up with an Ashekanzi partner. Subtle pressure from his Ashkenazi surroundings in the kibbutz and

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a prejudice towards the Mizrahi category seemed to inhibit the prospects for intermarriage.

The Chackotay family stressed ethnic origin as irrelevant in comparison with shared Jewishness. However, such inter-marriage should not be treated as self-evident. It is important to note that usually mixed marriages in the orthodox and ultra-orthodox communities are between various Mizrahi communities, or between various Ashkenazi communities. Research has shown that intermarriages between orthodox Ashkenazim and Mizrahim occur rarely (ICB 2004). The marriage between Revital and Benny's daughter, Keren and the "yekke", German-descended Oshri, was thus one atypical.

Marriage patterns governing orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jewish marriages are markedly different from the marriage patterns of more secular, or *Masorati* ("traditional," or "semi-observant," Hebrew) Jews. Orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews marry via arranged marriages set up through paid matchmaking service providers, through networks of rabbis and rabbis' wives, or by personal or familial networks, and only a fraction are non-arranged marriages based on dating, romance and falling in love prior to the marriage ceremony itself.

According to Keren, she was introduced to Oshri by a common friend (not a matchmaker) when they were students in Haifa, and not by a traditional matchmaker. During fieldwork, and also in the time after, I have not felt comfortable with asking how Oshri's parents reacted to their initial romance and subsequently agreed that he "married downward" with a Mizrahi family. However, I know that not only the young couple, but also the in-laws met regularly, thus perhaps indicating a mutual approval of their marriage.[88]

Revital and Benny Chackotay encouraged their children to intermarry with orthodox Ashkenazi Jews, as an avenue to upward social mobility and for the Ashkenazification of the Mizrahi mate. On *Erev* Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) October 8th 2008, I witnessed how Revital half-jokingly tried to introduce her unmarried son, Tal, to a young Ashkenazi volunteer from Jerusalem.[89] We were gathered for the last meal before the Yom Kippur fast and the family members (along with the

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[88] Contact with Mizrahi extended family tends to be limited to family visits on Shabbats and the holidays. Regular contact with Ashkenazi extended family may be more frequent, as they often provide monetary aid to the young couple. Children of the married couple may grow up unaware of Mizrahi rules of propriety and extended family gender dynamics in favor of Ashkenazi chutzpah (or a sense of uncritical entitlement) and Ashkenazi gender dynamics.

[89] As an alternative to army service they volunteered in various social programs, receiving the same benefits as regular soldiers.

researcher) were dressed in white garments.[90] Three religious eighteen year old girls volunteering in town were invited as honorary guests. The aroma of roasted fish filled the living room and the discussions were lively. Revital turned to a young redhead (*gingi*) volunteer and suggested she would be a suitable spouse for her son. The young girl blushed with embarrassment while Tal excused his mother's bold proposal. "I have been told to marry an Ashkenazi with a rich father," he laughed. Still, it was clear from the comment that Revital was acutely aware of the prestige associated with light skin and Ashkenazi marriage partners. In the Chackotay family, two out of the four children had married Orthodox Jewish Ashkenazim, and Revital was encouraging her unmarried son to do the same.[91]

At a family gathering one shabbat, I met Revital's Ashkenazi sister-in-law, Tammy. She was born and raised in an Orthodox Jewish family in New York and her parents were third generation American Jews from Poland. To settle in Israel was an act of fulfilling the meaning of her Jewishness. She felt that life as a Jew in Israel was more complete than the life of a Jew in the United States. Marriages between American orthodox Jews and Mizrahi orthodox Jews are almost always arranged, but in the case of Tammy, she met her husband when she volunteered in a in a kibbutz close to Kiryat Shemona. She came to Israel as a dedicated Zionist and her ultimate goal was to find a man and do aliyah as a married woman. She met Dan from a Persian Jewish background and her family had always accepted their marriage and her decision to live in Israel. Although she married outside her class and ethnicity, their common Zionist-religious identity was more important for them and their families.

Ashkeanzi orthodox Jews from the United States are more likely to marry Mizrahi orthodox Jews, in contrast to Ashekanzi orthodox Jews from Western Europe or Israel. This difference between orthodox Ashkenazim from the U.S. and those from Israel or Western Europe may be because of the more diverse nature of American society. Generally, American Jews are more open to diversity issues than those from

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[90] According to Jewish tradition, God inscribes each person's fate for the coming year into a 'book' on Rosh Hashanah and waits until Yom Kippur to 'seal' the verdict. All religious and many secular Jews fast and attend synagogue. There are no radio or television broadcasts and even non-observant Jews are expected to respect the holiness of the day by not driving or eating in public.

[91] Revital's wish for her son to marry an Ashkenazi corresponds to several studies conducted in the 1960s, that found out that not just Ashkenazim, but also Mizrahim (after their own community) preferred Ashkenazim to Mizrahim as neighbours and spouses (Ben-Rafael 1991:34).

Western Europe and Israel. Thus, American Jews tend to exoticize Mizrahim and more often act on their intra-Jewish inter-racial erotic desires.

Later that night we discussed the American presidential election. The candidacy of Barack Obama, whose father was black and mother was white, highlighted the subject of intermarriage. Although everyone believed that the Republican nominee John McCain would provide stronger support for Israel, Tammy commented positively on Obama's background: "He is half white, half black, half Muslim and half Christian. He truly represents the melting pot. Not unlike Israel." Tammy drew a noteworthy parallel from her own experience to Obama's background. Being married to an Israeli categorised as Mizrahi was unproblematic and she claimed that their children did not suffer discrimination as 'products' of a mixed marriage.

Nir, a twenty-five year old student at the Tel-Hai college portrayed a more complex situation. Nir's mother was Moroccan his father Polish. Both his looks and European surname offered a clear cue to Ashkenazi ethnic category membership. Having been born and raised in Kiryat Shemona, in a Mizrahi environment, this was more a source of frustration than pride.

> I wish it could be enough to say I am Israeli, but it is not. People always ask where your parents are from. I hope that in ten more years it will be enough to say I am Israeli. I have an Ashkenazi sounding surname, Bernstein, after my father's family. The name is a clear advantage for me; it is easier to get a good job. A Mizrahi name will probably mean that you will have a harder life. That is not fair. But it is sad in a way. People think that I look Ashkenazi because of my fair skin and blue eyes but the truth is that I am not. Most of my friends today are Mizrahim. I also find the Mizrahi women more beautiful than the Ashkenazim.

Nir hoped that, in time, a common Israeli identity would emerge. The tension generated because of his Mizrahi and European background was also the subject of casual joking. One day we chatted in the waiting room of the beauty parlor where his girlfriend Tamar worked. We sat down on the worn leather sofa, a popular place of relaxation for his group of friends. The buzzing sound of a hair dryer accompanied loud music from the popular IDF radio station *Galagalatz.* A friend entered the salon and Nir greeted him with a firm handshake and the words "what's up habibi" pronounced

with an Arabic accent. "Hey, my blue-eyed man!" the friend replied jokingly. Although the Arabic word *habibi* has become a word of everyday parlance in Israel, in this specific situation Nir used it as a subtle ethnic idiom to assert a common tie as Mizrahi. The joking comment about the colour of his eyes played on the incongruity between Nir's European appearance and the Mizrahi context of the beauty parlor.

The manager of a centre for youth in distress, Irit Aloni (36) illustrated another experience when we met in her office in November 2008. Like many young and educated Israelis who have been integrated into the mainstream of society, she felt that the ethnic divides in Israeli society had gradually decreased and used her own life history as an example. Coming from a poor Moroccan background she had successfully acquired status and income associated with the middle class. She had married a Russian immigrant; a relationship that she said would have been an exception a generation earlier. For her, intermarriage to a white man had been a way to resolve social and cultural exclusion. They had moved from Kiryat Shemona to a nearby kibbutz where they raised their children "in a better environment".

In David Grossman's book (2010) "*Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel,"a* Palestinian boy reveals his attitudes about intermarriage. He admires his uncle who succeeded in marrying a Jewish Mizrahi woman and he proudly says that his goal is to marry an Ashkenazi woman, demonstrating the social status he attached to the category. For the Palestinian boy, marriage with an Israeli-Ashkenazi included access to a package of resources and not necessarily the sentiment of emotional attachment to Israel.

For some Israelis, marriage is seen as a genetic/cultural way to make the 'ethnic problem' disappear. Many other young and educated Israelis I encountered in the major cities of Tel-Aviv and Haifa believed that ethnicity was an issue that concerned their parent's generation or the poorer segment of the population. In short they believed that Israelis on the same socio-economic level tend to think and behave in the same way, irrespective of their ethnic origin. Cross-ethnic friendships, mixed marriages and neighbourhoods seemed to be considered the rule, not the exception.

The previous examples of attitudes towards and experience of intermarriage, confirm the data from the Israeli census (2004) and show that the proportion marrying out of the Mizrahi category increases with education, while amongst Ashekanzim, the higher the education, the lower the rates of ethnic intermarriage. If less-educated Mizrahim and highly-educated Ashekanzim do not marry otuside their groups, they

reinforce ethnic continuity. At the same time, polarisation continues to emerge as inter-marriage reinforces the ethno-class overlap (Wistrich 2005:136). In this sense, the educational selectivity of ethnic intermarriage in Israel may paradoxically represent one of the structural conditions that reinforce ethnic categories and the continuity of ethno-classes.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the various situations in daily life when 'everyday nationalism' was not pervasive. Members of the Chackotay and Zakay families did not frame all their cares and concerns in nationalist terms. My informants' self-identification as cultured, Persian, Western, religious and traditional were equally important categories of identification. The many different situational self-identifications also challenge macro-theorisations that envelope all Mizrahim under one category. The socio-economic or class distribution of the ethnic categories, whether measured by income, occupation or education, no doubt account in part for the differences in ethnic status and prestige that are attributed to the categories of Mizrahi and Ashkenazi. Statistics on income and occupation from the Israeli Bureau of Statistics show that ethno-class disparities between the centre and peripheral development towns do exist. However, the socio-economic picture reflects the overall state of the town's residents without revealing any internal differences and hierarchies. My informants were divided by strength of religious belief, occupation, immigration histories and income. Accordingly, there were varying degrees of ethno-classism in town. Attitudes towards categories of belonging considered culturally distinctive such as Moroccan, Persian, Iraqi, Mizrahim and Ashkenazim differed, even within families. Throughout my fieldwork, the category of Mizrahi was rarely invoked explicitly, but was more often implied. Outside the domain of synagogue, food and stereotypical descriptions of difference, people that I knew refrained from using these categories. Various Jewish ethnic categories were not expressed in a separatist fashion but became a point of negotiating the ethnic hierarchy. Ethnic divisions were shaped by a settler colonial society but they were also produced and reproduced through the ordinary everyday activities of the households in Kiryat Shemona.

Chapter 4

Peripheral Nationhood: Fear, faith and strength in a border town

The ideal is no longer peace, but the absence of war.

The late poet Yehuda Amicahi

The residents' shared experiences of common threats and largely shared ethno-economic class have created a clear sense of belonging to Kiryat Shemona that is distinct from the centre. I suggest that the emphasis on 'strength' as a spoken and behavioural code has emerged to reconcile the tension between the Zionists' esteemed value of frontier settlements and their actual deprivation. 'Strength' was applied in practice and discourse to cope with borderland anxieties and their structurally entrapped position within the Israeli ethnocracy. As a both locally and nationally esteemed value, 'strength' allowed my informants to negotiate nationhood from the periphery. In the build-up to war Mizrahim, who were at the geographical and socio-economic margins of society, were nationalised by politicians and media as essential members of the nation and key actors in the moral legitimisation of war. Self-nationalisation processes intensified in the build-up to and during war and helped make my informants forget or avoid their structural entrapment and feel valued and central.

Existential insecurity as an ordinary situation

Several scholars of nationalism argue that the production of national sentiments can be a strategy to counter fear and sources of moral grounding. Hastings argues that nationalist sentiments arise chiefly when and where a particular ethnic or national group feels that its character or importance is being threatened, for instance through external attack or an imagined threat or grievance (Hastings 1997:198). According to Giddens, the psychology of nationalism is that of an extraordinary emotional mood that occurs when ordinary life is disrupted (1985:218). National sentiments rise up when the "sense of ontological security is put in jeopardy by the disruption of routines". In these circumstances, "regressive forms of object-identification" tend to occur with the result that individuals invest great emotional energy in the symbols of nationhood and in the

promise of strong leadership (Giddens quoted in Billig 1995:44). Myths founded in religion might also gain more support in a country whose population are faced periodically with similar challenges to their physical survival (Hutchinson 2000:661). In the context of an Israeli border town, ordinary life was affected by nationalist sentiments because conflict was not a relatively transitory condition but perceived as a permanent condition. The residents shared a perception of common dangers and threats that made existential insecurity an ordinary situation.

The Israeli State is involved in an intense conflict with its neighbours and is anxious to secure colonial control over Palestinian territory and its population, as well as contested territory and the Arab national minority. The Jewish-Arab Palestinian conflict has, most of the time, been understood as "routine, immutable, an uncontrollable given, an eternal fate" (Kimmerling 2008:156). Major human, emotional and material resources are invested and recruited for national security concerns to construct and reproduce a society that is ready to mobilize from war to war (Kimmerling 2008:163). The army and security apparatus are persistent features of the public sphere. In my daily life, I found myself surrounded by an endless number of security measures. Guards were deployed at the entrances to malls, restaurants, public buildings and sometimes even synagogues and weddings. On my trips in and out of town, the buses were usually filled with solders in uniforms with M16s slung diagonally over their shoulders. The army and security networks are used to protect 'normal' life and to create a sense of safety for citizens. However it also reinforces a sense of living in fear, in suspicion of every unfamiliar person. A frightened civilian can identify a stranger by their ethnic traits. Under these conditions, one becomes more susceptible to stereotypes and those who match the profile of a suspected person (i.e., Arab looking) will suffer.

Ochs notes how suspicion is one of the primary modes through which Israelis engage with Palestinians in their daily lives (2011:84). Sitting on the train from Tel-Aviv to Haifa, I witnessed such habitual suspicion when an Arab-looking passenger left his blue plastic bag unattended for a brief moment. Within five minutes, two armed security guards evacuated the passengers to the next wagon, only to confirm that the bag was filled with vegetables and beer cans. Profiling is a key part of the security system, in the streets and at the airport. When I arrived in Israel with a passport filled with stamps from countries considered enemies of Israel, such as Syria and Yemen, I was detained with other individuals classified as suspicious, most of them were Arab-

looking. I was already used to the 'security routine' at Ben-Gurion airport after several trips in and out of Israel. Even with two passports and a statement from University of Haifa I was interrogated, body searched and given a personal escort through customs. A young American student of Indian background was a first-time visitor to Israel and more confused. He was on his way on a three-days pilgrimage in the Bahai Garden in Haifa and did not understand why he was not allowed entrance immediatly with his American passport. Althoug the official answer he was given was that it was for security concerns and therefore necessary, it was evident that his dark skin automatically put him under suspicion. This demonstrates how profiles and practices of suspicion are central domains in which racial categories are assigned and simultaneously national solidarity and Israeliness are upheld.

Figure 12. Guards following the ulpan class on an excursion to Metula in 2006.

Fear and traumatic memory

Kiryat Shemona is a relatively short journey from Tel-Aviv, only a two and a half hour drive. However, viewed from the centre, the town is seen as a distant, deprived and unsafe place. It has been the frequent target of Katyusha rockets, particularly during the 2006 Lebanon War when more than 1,000 Hezbollah-fired rockets hit the town.[92] My informants' social experience was partly formulated in terms of fear, hostility, strength and survival. Memories from war and past rocket attacks were frequent themes of conversation and part of collective memory. Several residents told me that they knew of children that wet their beds at night, a manifestation of their fear and anxiety.

When I first met my neighbour Esther Zakay she welcomed me mockingly to the *Kiryat Katyusha* (the Katysha town). On arrival, we walked in their neighbourhood and she painstakingly pointed towards places that had been hit by Katysha rockets during the Lebanon war in 2006. As we had lunch in the garden, she nodded towards the corners of her house while explaining how they had been damaged by rocket shrapnel. During the war she had, like others who remained in town, spent long hours in bomb shelters.[93] Touching an empty aquarium, she explained in a sentimental tone that her two goldfish had died from shock. I remember thinking the mourning of a fish to be odd in contrast to all the human causalities. But for Esther, who took their death so heavily, they seemed to have symbolized a peaceful time.

After the war, Esther had participated in a research project at the Stress Prevention Centre at the Tel-Hai College and had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome.[94] She regularly expressed anxiety about Katyusha rocket attacks. While eating lunch with the Zakay family one September afternoon we suddenly heard a loud noise. Esther jumped in her chair; she held her breath before shaking her head. "Oi va voi, I thought for a moment it was a Katyusha rocket!" Opening the door of the house, we found out that the sound had come from a garbage truck. After the incident,

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[92] In 1981, PLO -fired Katyusha rockets hit the town and an attack in March 1986 killed a teacher and injured five others. After the Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in 2000 and until the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006, the residents of the region enjoyed relative peace, although every few weeks there would be loud explosions due to Hezbollah anti-aircraft cannons firing at IAF planes flying across the Israeli-Lebanese border.
Nine Katyushas have struck northern Israel since the Second Lebanon War in 2006, however the Lebanon-Israel border has been largely quiet ever since.
[93] There are two hundre public bomb shelters in KS according the municipality.
[94] This project was led by Professor Mooli Lahad, director of the Stress Prevention Centre at the Tel-Hai College.

Esther said that she had learned to live with this uncertain situation. "It has become like a habit. Whenever a Katyusha falls you go to the shelter, then afterwards life continues. You can't be afraid all the time." Judith, the ulpan teacher, recalled a story of how her family had been interrupted by a sharp sound during a Shabbat dinner, in the midst of the *kiddush.* The children immediately hid under the table out of fear. During another dinner with Judith's family, I witnessed a similar situation when we heard a passing aircraft. Immediately she put her cutlery down and said that this might be the start of an attack.

In another situation, I traveled by bus to Tamar Chackotay's wedding in Safed. All the guests were dressed in their best clothes. Colourful ribbons were displayed all over the bus, making the atmosphere festive. The busdriver had turned up the music on the radio. Suddenly the music stopped and a somber voice said something I did not hear properly, so I asked Keren sitting next to me. "It is about the war. They say, and I am sure rightly, that there will soon be a war. There is a word you need to know to live in Israel. *Balagan (mess).* There is always *balagan,*" Keren said sarcastically. The news seemed to have put a momentary damper on the festive mood. The driver switched the radio off. It was quiet as we drove on through the night.

The future was perceived as highly insecure in the town. Some of my informants said that knowing that war was inevitable was a great hindrance in planning for their future. Oshri Chozev (29), the Chackotay couple's son-in-law, was a soldier in the paratroopers, an elite unit of the IDF. He remembered sleeping with his boots on and worrying about his friends during his military participation in the Lebanon war in 2006. When I met Oshri in October 2008, he did not hide his fear for future conflict.

> I will not even make plans for the summer. Who knows what might happen? It is important not to panic or lose control but I feel like the situation is out of control. It feels like another war is around the corner. I am back home but I do not feel safe. When I feel like this, it is difficult to move forward in life.

Breaking with the ideal of the fearless solder, Oshri admitted that he was anxious and felt fear. Evidently he could not conceptualise peace, only interwar periods in a society on constant military alert.

The national idealisation of border towns

The 'border' represents the dynamic aspect of processes of becoming and negotiations over meanings of nationhood.

> Borders are the legal borderline which simultaneously separate and joins state: the physical structures of the state which exist to demarcate and protect the borderline, composed of people and institutions which often penetrated deeply into the territory of the state, and the frontiers, territorial zones of varying width which stretch across and away from borders, within which people negotiate a variety of behaviours and meanings associated with their membership in nations and states (cf. Martinze 1994:5, Prescott 1987, Herzog 1990:16 quoted in Donnan and Wilson 1998:12).

Despite living far from the centres of national governance, border populations are an integral part of the nation-state's imaginary (Johnson 2010). Long before statehood, Israel's frontier settlements have been idealised and encouraged to create a unique social and moral identity, mobilise support and serve as a vital tool for nation building (Yiftachel 2006:108). However, unifying icons and rationales for frontier settlements have also worked to gloss over and conceal the inequalities and divisions created by state practices controlling territory and peripheral populations. The idealisation of the peripheral communities continues today, particularly during wartime. Two months before IDF's massive military attack on Gaza on September 23th 2008, Israel's former Prime minister, Ehud Olmert visited Kiryat Shemona. The purpose of his visit was not only to gather political votes, but to idealize the role of the town in providing security for the centre. Olmert had a meeting with the Mayor, Sami Malul, and members of the Kiryat Shemona City Council at the *Ironit* football stadium, where he praised the role of development towns in providing regional development. His statement "your patriotism is a source of security for all of us" shows how he revalidated the role of the Mizrahi ethno-class in the national ethos. The government moved Mizrahim from a stigmatised periphery to a national frontier where they were needed for the state's defence and territorial control. The state glorification of the periphery took place in an overall context of a society united under threats, real or imagined, from its Arab external and internal threatening others.

Figure 13. The state idealisation of the peripheries: Ehud Olmert visited Kiryat Shemona September 23th 2008.

My informants had mixed feelings about Olmert's visit. On the one hand they were excited because their town was in the national news but on the other hand, they frequently complained about his corruption, weak leadership and neglect of the periphery[95]. They were deeply disillusioned with their government and felt that their elected officials lacked accountability. Esther shared her mistrust and frustration with greedy and corrupted politicians stealing money from the state, "putting it in their pockets" and neglecting the people. She once illustrated her dissatisfaction with contemporary politicians by showing me an issue of the local newspaper *Ideot Kiryat Shemona.* The front page pictured the seven candidates for the upcoming elections for new mayor in November 2008. She pointed at the different portraits and said: "This is a thief, this is a thief and this is a thief."

Several residents described Olmert's predecessor in Kadima, Tsipi Livni, as a weak leader. The former foreign minister framed the election campaign in 2009 as "a choice between a Jewish State and a bi-national State". "Will we be a state of fear or a

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[95] During his three years in office, he was plagued by a series of corruption scandals, which played a major part in his eventual resignation.

state of hope?" Livni rejected the idea of a national unity government with the Likud promoted by the party's hawkish wing, despite polls that showed a significant increase in the latter's electoral strength (Mendilow 2010:82).

"Is she strong enough?" was Likud's election campaign title for the national elections questioning Tsipi Livni's capability for providing security. The campaign implied that security and military strength was first and foremost a masculine quality. The regional web site for Kiryat Shemona and the northern region, featured satirical images of politicians. An adverstisment portrayed Livni and Olmert in a treee accompanied by the text "a celebration in the jungle", clearly mocked the Kadima politicans for being weak and disorganised (readme.co.il, accessed on 13th November 2008).

Figure 14. "A celebration in the jungle."

By contrast, Livni's main rival in Kadima for the candidacy to become Israel's next Prime Minister, Iranian-born Shoal Mofaz, was referred to a strong and particularly popular with members of the Persian Jewish Chackotay family.[96] The former IDF chief of staff and defence minister represented military power over 'softer' diplomacy. Several of the residents of Kiryat Shemona believed that the IDF was the only governmental body that provided them with a real sense of security and protection and

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[96] Shaul Mofaz lost to Tsipi Livni's bid for leadership in Kadima after Ehud Olmert.

the importance of strong leadership before an upcoming war was mentioned as crucial.

By framing the perception of threats, political actors attempted to depict themselves as the best providers of collective protection in order to gain popular support (Béland 2005:3). The right-wing party Likud contributed to the building of collective anxiety as national ideologies of threat and defence and exaggerated strategic concerns in the "war on terror" in their policy agendas (Ochs 2011:14). The election campaign of Israel's current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu focused on military strength and his strong leadership, a powerful formula for the residents of Kiryat Shemona who felt under threat. Likud invested almost half of its electoral budged in the development of TV and online campaigns in Hebrew and Russian. In one of Likud's election videos, Netanyahu spoke from the top of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. His message to the public was that strong leadership was needed to face the "security and economic challenge" (www.haaretz.com, 18th December 2008, accessed on 21st August 2011).

Voters of Likud supported militaristic ethno-nationalism in the exchange for the promise of well-being and security. The overwhelming majority of residents in Kiryat Shemona cast their vote for right-wing parties such as Likud (33%) or Yisrael Beiteinu (23%), whose effort to fan anti-Arab sentiments won growing popularity before and during the War on Gaza (www.readme.co.il, accessed on 20th May 2009).

Gilad Shalit is still alive

With the demystification of Hebrew myths and disillusionment with contemporary politicians, a new national icon emerged during fieldwork, that of Gilad Shalit, the solder who was abducted by Hamas militants on 25th June 2006 and kept in captivity for five years.[97] During Gilad's years in captivity he shifted from a soldier in distress to an Israeli national symbol and icon of patriotism. To keep their son's name in the public consciousness, the Shalit family established "Gilad's Army of Friends", a grassroots campaign of volunteers, advertising executives and public-relations strategists. National and international awareness campaigns produced billboards, banners, flags, pins and dog tags with his face printed on them in using national colours and symbols.[98] His

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[97] Gilad was released from Hamas captivity Tuesday 18th October 2011 as a part of a prisoner exchange where a total of 1026 Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli prisons.

[98] The online edition of major Israeli newspapers such as Haaretz.com and Maariv.co.il exhibit electronic banners and links to information and videos of Gilad Shalit. In 2008, the pop singer Aviv Gefen wrote a song dedicated to the soldier called "Everybody's Child" (Hayeled shel kulano) which invoked the

image was displayed and waved daily and had become firmly imprinted in the national consciousness.

Flags from the nation-wide campaign for the return of Gilad Shalit were waved as a daily reminder of what was publically perceived as an unfinished war. It is a core doctrine of the Israeli Defence Forces not to leave a soldier behind in the field, and the dominant public sentiment was that the government did not do enough to secure his release. Gilad Shalit came to embody the sentiments of many Israelis, the perception that in the area of security the government was not doing enough to safeguard the country's residents.

Figure 15. "Gilad is still alive" banner hanging from a private home in Kiryat Shemona.

During and after the Second Lebanon War in July 2006, the Mizrahi population in the Northern region felt abandoned by the state.[99] The residents of Kiryat Shemona, brought into the spotlight by international media, complained about economic hardhsip and called into question the ability of the government to provide security. Esther felt that the municipality managed the aftermath of the war on Lebanon in 2006 poorly. It was only when volunteers from the army arrived with food and assisted with cleaning that she felt someone cared about them. After this Lebanon war she had contemplated

kinship terms that are frequently used in nationalist discourse. Gilad's supporters planted a tent outside Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem and a billboard was displayed for months across IDF's headquarter in Tel-Aviv.
[99] To read analysis of the Israel-Lebanon war 2006 in relation to Mizrahi read; Smadar Lavie & Reuven Abariel: 'Operations 'Summer Rains' and 'Adequate Pay'' - yet other acts in the Mizrahi-Palestinian tragedy. *Jordan Times*, 27 July 2006.

not flying the Israeli flag on *Yom Haatzmaot* (Independence Day), since it was difficult to feel patriotic when they had had such a terrible year. However, the strategic position of the border Mizrahi ethno-class within the military state and political culture can be said to have strengthened post-Lebanon 2006.

Making the margins central

In the months leading up to the Israeli War on Gaza in 2008/2009, political and religious leaders, as well as the media, created a strong public awareness of Mizrahi-dense border towns facing the rockets in a manner that validated their place in the Zionist ethos and army. The Mizrahi ethno-class at the geographical margins of the state became central actors as they temporarily were considered crucial in the national and moral legitimization of war.

Media aligned the border towns with the centre which was being encouraged to show solidarity with the peripheries and in particular the 'Southern Front'. The *Yeshivat Hesder* in Sderot, launched a nationwide campaign in 2007 to raise awareness of the situation in the South and reclaim what they described as Israel's lost self-respect. One of the leading rabbis in the religious Zionist movement, former Member of Knesset Rabbi Hanan Porat, established a group called 'Raising the Flag for Sderot'. He blamed the government for not taking effective measures against Hamas, and by doing so "desecrating God". Porat argued that we "must lead the nation into standing erect, and that attacks in Sderot were not the problem of the residents alone, but everyone's problem" (Jerusalem Post 27th May 2007, accessed on 14th September 2009).

Visits by international politicians increased media attention and this campaigning contributed to transforming Sderot into a world symbol of Israeli suffering and the threats posed to the Jewish nation. [100] Barak Obama visited the town as the US Democratic presidential candidate on 23rd July 2008. At the press conference towards the end of his visit, he received an "I love Sderot" t-shirt depicting a heart pierced by a rocket through from the town's mayor, Eli Moyal (Yediot Aheronot 23th July 2008).

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[100] In addition to frequent visits of high-profiled politicians to Sderot, other initiatives from below put Sderot on the national and international map. In August 2008, Israelis from the centre went solidarity shopping in Sderot in order to show their support for the residents. The organisation 'Standing Together' organized a campaign to order *challah* (bread for Sabbath) from bakeries in Sderot.

The Israeli consulate in Los Angeles arranged a "live4Sderot" campaign including a concert to raise awareness for Sderot. The live-concert was held at the Wilshire Theatre in Los Angeles which the presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Barak Obama attended in support. The director of the Foreign Ministry's public affairs department said that the concert, along with videos launched on You Tube, "was part of a systematic campaign to raise awareness of what Israel is facing and how it is dealing with Hamas terrorism" (Jpost 29th January 2008).

Just a few days before the Israeli war on Gaza, on 21 December 2008, Benjamin Netanyahu visited the southern border town of Sderot, a town structurally similar to Kiryat Shemona, and gave an emotional speech which was broadcast on television. He blamed the situation in the south on the government's lack of action and said that Kadima, the political party in power, was responsible for their suffering. He promised that Likud leadership would provide *bitachon* (security) and support military operations over soft diplomacy. By appropriating the concept of security, he revalorised the role of development towns in defending the nation.

Little was heard about the several Ashkenazi-dominated settlements surrounding the towns. The shouting and suffering came largely from the Mizrahi-dominated communities representing the poorest segment of Israel's Jewish population. In contrast to the national image of self-sacrificing and strong Ashkenazi kibbutznikim, the Mizrahim were portrayed as passive victims of conflict in need of a paternal army and national support. This representation fed into an already existing image of development towns as impoverished and neglected places. Even though portrayed as victims of geo-political conflict, the residents of Sderot were moved from the margins to the centre of a national frontier, thus blurring the image of a periphery.

Self-nationalisation as strong and steadfast

Analyzing the situation of Mizrahim in development towns, Yiftachel argues that the Mizrahi residents in Israeli frontier towns are left in a metaphorical and ambivalent 'twilight zone' entrapped between integration and alternatives (Yiftachel 2004:204). His approach highlights institutional discourse but does not account for the role of personal agency. Herzfeld argues in his study of bureaucracy and statehood, that studies of nationalism from above fail "to recognize the role of the ordinary person in taking the grand images by the leadership and recasting them in the more familiar terms of local

experience" (1992:49). Nationalism can be projected onto ordinary people by pervasive national (ist) elites and leaders. In this way subjects may appear as nationalised, but they are stripped of their agency to appear as (self)-nationalising subjects. Jean-Klein defines 'self-nationalisation' as: "A process wherein ordinary persons fashion themselves into nationalised subjects, using distinctive narrative actions and embodied practices that are woven into the practice of everyday life" (2001:90).

Placed at the geographical and the socio-economic margins of the collective, my informants claimed not only to be victims of pervasive nationalism, but were also co-authors in the construction of national identiy, or what I have termed 'peripheral nationhood'. I suggest that "strength as a spoken value and behavioural code" (Sa'ar 2006) was a key element of the self-nationalisation processes in Kiryat Shemona. Residents fashioned themselves into strong citizens to cope with borderland anxieties and as a way to fashion themselves as vital actors in Israeli nation-building.

Steffen Jensen (2008) shows in his ethnography that amongst the colored people of the Cape Flats, some were able to turn their ability to endure violence into a sign of heroic stoicism. In Kiryat Shemona, the public discourse of development towns as deprived places contradicted their self-identification as strong and capable of enduring hardship. The geographic proximity to a perceived hostile border combined with lack of employment has contributed to a relatively high turn-around of residents. Several residents I met expressed a wish to leave their town, but most of them were structurally without sufficent finances and networks to establish life elsewhere. They thus created a local identiy around heroic steadfastness in contrast to those who had left town. Although several Mizrahim continue to suffer from multiple forms of exclusion (such as colonial racism and labour discrimination) they challenged their position in the ethnocray by emphasizing local identities.

In June 2008, I was having lunch with a friend in West-Jerusalem. A Palestinian man drove a truck into a crowded street, killing one person and injuring several others. I was only a few hundred meters away from the event but felt composed and finished my meal before we continued to wander the streets of the Old town. By then, the incident had reached the news but life seemed to go on as normal. The exception was the nervous chattering of a group of American tourists, clearly upset by this dramatic event. Later that week, I discussed my emotional response with Maya, a Jewish Israeli friend from Kiryat Shemona.

Your reaction means that you are on your way to becoming Israeli. You become tougher, stronger, and get thicker skin. You learn to deal with the situation and move on. You can't retreat to your own room and be depressed and alone, you need to continue with your life.

Maya commented that my calm reaction during this critical event meant that I was developing unique Israeli qualities of strength. I had heard this sort of analysis several times: *"We have learned to live with the situation, we have gotten strong."*

Countering his wife Esther's narrative of trauma and anxiety, Rahamim fashioned himself and the town's residents as strong.

I don't mean to brag, but I was not too afraid. A new war will face those with weak nerves. I am no hero, but it is important to remain strong. There's no city in the world that will stand tall in times of hardship like Kiryat Shemona. And as for the next war-we will stand tall then, too.

Although suffering from traumatic memories, Esther was proud that she had lived through the hardship of several wars and that she had not fled the town. Esther laid claim to Israeliness by self-fashioning as strong but also used ethnic categories to make this point. She applied the local value of 'strength' to distance herself from the Ashkenazim and argued that those with weak nerves (not necessarily wealth) had left town. She did not explain the disproportionally high exodus of Ashkenazi residents as related to financial means but according to their coping capabilities. Esther did not compare their suffering with that of their Palestinian neighbours, but with the rest Israel and particularly the centre. The centre referred to Ashkenazim who reproduced socio-political norms and had access to symbolic capital and material resources. Ashkenazim in Tel-Aviv or in the wealthy suburb of Ramat HaSharon were ignorant and not aware of life in the north. In the centre, people were colder and only concerned about money. People in Kiryat Shemona were warmer and more welcoming. She compared the experience of living in Kiryat Shemona with life in Sderot. She identified with the population there but expressed envy of how frequent the town occurred in media during the build up to war. One evening I watched the commercial Channel 2 with the Zakay family. A nationwide TV campaign asked the population to express solidarity with the population in the South. The campaign was called *Ha Darom Shelli* (My South) and

showed famous Israelis greeting, praying and singing for the inhabitants of Sderot. The campaign led Esther to wave her hands in frustration. *"The Qazzam rockets they receive in Sderot are nothing compared to the Katyusha rockets in the north!"* Her annoyace revealed a commonly held sentiment in Kiryat Shemona of being forgotten and neglected by the centre between wars.

The ulpan educator, Judith and her husband Avri, claimed that only devoted and strong residents had remained in Kiryat Shemona. Even though they had the financial means to move elsewhere, they were proud of what they saw as their national contribution. All their old friends from their school days had "fled the Katyushot". During the war with Lebanon in 2006, almost half the city's residents left the area. Avri remained in town even though he had the opportunity to evacuate. Sitting on his balcony, Avri recalled the war and his strong connection to the town. "I had to stay. I felt like I was part of a national mission."

Before Avri became a wealthy factory manager, he had been discriminated against by his Kibbutz employer due to his Mizrahi background.[101] Like other Mizrahim, he was largely marginalised within the national settlement ethos, even if they populated the same regions and were employed in typical 'pioneering' work. By living in Kiryat Shemona and remaining in the town during rocket fire, he felt that his contribution to the security of the state was finally acknowledged. Peripheral nationhood had thus become a strategy to include himself in the national ethos from which he had been excluded from at one time.

Sylvia Parto, the former principle of Dancinger High School , welcomed me at her home in March 2009. [102] From a Moroccan Jewish family, she had been born and raised in Kiryat Shemona and her living room was adorned with decorations, including a huge painting of the four-fingered hand of Fatima. Although she had lived in Kiryat Shemona her entire life, she had never gotten used to war. "Children should get used to ice-cream, but not to rockets,! she said energeticallly. She was very proud and strongly identified herself with Kiryat Shemona and had realized that not all Israelies could live in the centre. Living in the Galilee had, for her, become an important part of practicing Zionism, a view that was shared by several other residents. Maintaining a strong Jewish presence in the Northern region was key in order to prevent the Arabs from taking over the land. It was important to remain strong and patriotic, otherwise Jews might be

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[101] See the first chapter about his experiences with racism in Kibbutz Kfar Sol.
[102] Dancinger is the largest High School in KS.

confined to the Diaspora again. Sylvia appeared dedicated to her career path and had clear suggestions about what was needed to facilitate attachment to the town. The economic deprivation and many rocket attacks, combined with stigmatisation, had made Kiryat Shemona a particulary challenging place to grow up in for young people. She taught schoolchildren a strong national spirit *(roach etnam)* which they could use as a coping strategy for living in a border area under the constant threat of attack. Sylvia believed that the centre could learn much from the population in Kiryat Shemona about strength, particularly since the frontier had moved further south during the war with Lebanon in 2006, during which rockets hit Haifa. "When you're in a survival mood, you don't fall apart." For Sylvia, it seemed like the very process of talking and teaching about *koach* (strenght) had enabled her to develop a distinct sense of local attachment to the town. Both Esther, Avri and Sylvia rejected the negative images commonly generated about their town by the general Israeli public. By highlighting the unique qualities of its strong and resilient residents they countered the stigmatised images of place while empowering themselves as central actors of the national Jewish collective.

The fighting rabbi

In this section we will consider how the IDF serves as an important site for the reproduction of national unity and divisions in Kiryat Shemona. Within Israeli society, analysts have generally emphasised how political and professional careers are linked to military service. Those placed on the lower rungs of the ethnic hierarchy can increase their opportunities for careers and social climbing through military service. Levy maintains that the Israeli army up to the end of the 1970s reproduced and legitimised social inequalities (1998:884). The elite soldier was typically a white middle-class secular Ashkenazi Jewish man who was identified with the status symbols of the warrior. The soldiers who were confined to the margins of the army with lower ranks and most often sent to the frontline of battle, were Mizrahim and Arabs (Yuval-Davis 1997:94).[103] Ashkenazim were considered historically to have contributed more to 'national redemption' than Mizrahim. This situation legitimised their inferior position in the social hierarchy and ruled out social protest by Mizrahim against the practices

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[103] The groups at the economic and geographical margins of the state, such as the Mizrahim, Druze, Russian immigrants and Ethiopians have formed the majority of IDF (Israeli Defence Force) causalities of the al-Aqsa intifada since October 2000 (Lavie & Abariel 2006).

that reproduced the ethnocray. The rise of neo-liberal values of individualism in the early 1990s changed the role of the IDF for the kibbutznikim and Ashkenazi upper-class circles. More Ashkenazim are choosing not to be combat soldiers and this has led the way to more mobility and equality for Mizrahim within the army. Netanyahu's promise of an attack on Gaza and the rebuilding of trust in the IDF resonated well with residents, for which the IDF was still the main lever of social mobility. Soldiers from the Mizrahi ethno-class can change their loyalty to the army in the hope of socio-economic equality.

Religion can also provide crucial organisational and ideological resources for nationalism and the institutionalised expressions of collective identity (Hearn 2006:217). Catarina Kinnvall has demonstrated how ontological insecurity played a key role in the resurgence of "religious nationalism" in India among Hindu and Sikh populations. Kinnvall argues that religious collective identities can help individuals who feel vulnerable and who experience existential insecurity. Religion, like nationalism, gives answers to the individual's quest for security by providing a picture of totality, unity and wholeness. That God has set the rules, and made them difficult to contest, relieves the individual psychologically from the responsibility of having to choose (2004:759).

Mizrahim along with Orthodox Jews are the new elite soldiers in Israel's military and according to Levy, a central factor in the militarisation of Israel (Levy 2007). Military service, through a religious Yeshivat Hesder, allows a recruit to spread his three years of conscription over six years, alternating between a semester of study at a religious academy and a semester in uniform (Antoun & Hegland 1987:183).[104] The Hesder Yeshivas, which were largely set up in the mid-1970s after the Yom Kippur war, represent a national-religious commitment to Greater Israel. [105] The curriculum in the Yeshiva includes nationalist and religious indoctrination that is rife with fundamentalist ideas about "redemption" and "wars of commandment" aimed at ensuring "ideological resilience" (Ben-Eliezer 1998:334). The graduates, many of whom become senior officers in the IDF, are influenced by the authority of rabbis who

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[104] Usually the term yeshiva is related to religious seminaries for unmarried young men. After marriage, men go to *Kolel.*
[105] The ethno-religious neo-Zionists advocate an exclusive Jewish State that incorporates the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The belief in territorial expansion originates from the concept of *Eretz Yisrael* or 'Greater Israel' which believes that the land is granted to Jews by God. Such dangerous aspects of modern nationalism have their roots in the Christian assumption that there can be only "one fully elected nation, one's own, the true successor to ancient Israel" (Hastings 1997).

relentlessly preach a messianic doctrine holding that the State of Israel is sanctified and is watched over by Divine Providence (ibid:335).

The chief rabbi of Kiryat Shemona, Zephaniah Drori, is a leading scholar of the religious Zionist camp and plays an instrumental role in the militarisation and sacralisation of the periphery. Rabbi Drori established the *Yeshivat Hesder* in 1977 and today it has an enrolment of around 400 students. In a video called 'In the Footsteps of Heroes', the Yeshiva states its ethno-national position very clearly. It starts off with a Talmudic phrase "the guardians of Israel neither slumber nor sleep…"

> Kiryat Shemona is on the frontline of battle for Israel's survival and Yeshivat Hesder is the heart and soul of that community. The self-sacrifice exhibited on a daily basis, to be that safety zone, to be that buffer from its Arab enemies that would like to see Israel wiped off the face of the map, is a normal way of life. You're three kilometres away from Hezbollah. You can look at the Golan Heights, it is a foremost position to safeguard Jerusalem. Kiryat Shemona is what keeps Ahmedinedjad and Assad out of Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. The students are Israel's secret weapon. They are ready to put down the book and pick up the gun (http://wn.com/Kiryat Shemona, accessed on 11th November 2011).

 This statement raises the importance of the border town as a guardian for the whole country to the level of a sacred mission. The rhetoric of a 'safety zone' as a 'normal way of life', resonated both with Zionism's hegemonic proto-idea of settlement and security and its residents' self-identification as strong and steadfast. While the Mizrahi ethno-class was largely excluded from the Zionist secular pioneering ethos, a religious leader incorporated them into the sacred duty of protecting national territory. Members of the Chackotay family perceived it as their ideological and sacred obligation to stay put in the north and to protect national territory. They argued that if everyone left, the land would be taken over by Arabs: "Medinat Yisrael (the nation of Israel) needs us here!"

The existence of external and internal enemies was central to their sense of self and community. Their negotiation of Jewishness was not only restricted to their status as religious Orthodox Jews protecting a national territory from Arabs, but to their role in protecting the 'West' more generally against Islam. The belief in the Eurabia conspiracy theory, alleging Arabisation and Islamisation of Europe, strengthened their perception

of the threat posed by Muslim others in the region.[106] Benny Chackotay, who had never been outside of Israel's border since his arrival as a child, believed that the Turks would soon outnumber the Germans and that the Moroccan and Algerian communities were a threat to France. He wanted to know the size of the Muslim population in Norway and whether my country was aslo in danger of Islamisation. By believing in a radical external Muslim enemy, the threats, from domestic differences and anxieties such as ethno-demographic fears realting to the presence of Palestinians or non-Jewish citizens, can remain in "their place" (Ram 2009:18). The perceived threats to European and Western values resonated amongst my informants, many of whom remained strongly attached to their Arab or Muslim homelands in practice.

I spend the holiday Tisha B' Av (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av) on the 9th of August 2008, with the Chackotay family. Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple and is observed by means of a fast, lasting from one sunset to the next (Taus 2008:170). For the Chackotay family, it was a day of fasting and prayer in which to reflect upon the destiny of the Jewish people. After the prayer, Benny linked the destruction of the two temples, and past attempts to destroy the Jewish people, to the threats posed to Israel by its Arab enemies. He believed that the struggle for survival continued and that the IDF was instrumental in protecting the sacred territory of Eretz Israel granted to Jews by God. The Chackotay family fashioned themselves into guardians of national territory and their strength of belief became a resource for negotiating their position within the ethnocracy. For them, the sacred obligation of remaining steadfast provided them with a claim to national belonging and a sense of worth.

Benny and Revital Chackotay's youngest son, Tal (24) was enrolled at the local Yeshiva Hesder. I never followed him to the Yeshiva but its concept of sacred defence was brought into everday life. Except during his periods of army service in Sderot, he had lived in Kiryat Shemona his entire life. In October 2008, he had just returned from two weeks military service in Gaza and like the general public he was convinced that

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[106] Giselle Litmann (who writes under the pseudonym Bat Ye'Or or Daughter of the Nile) argued in *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis* (2005) is a secret project exists between European politicians and the Arab world for the 'Islamisation of Europe', the purpose of which is to destroy America and Israel, along with Europe, is a doomed continent on the brink of cultural extinction in the face of a relentless and coordinated campaign of domination by Muslims to transform it into an Islamic colony called Eurabia. In this colony, Europeans would be turned into the slaves of Muslims and forced into a state of 'dhimmitude' or subject status - in accordance with the 'dhimmi' or treaty enforced on the 'Peoples of the Book' during the Islamic caliphate" (irr.org.uk, accessed on 12th November 2011).

another war was coming soon. When I asked precisely when, he said that within the next year there would be "another tough war" as a direct response to the threats posed by Hamas and their allies in Ahmenadinejad's Iran. As if to remind us all that the seeming normality around us was fragile and might be broken soon, he said laughing: "I am ready to fight again!" Turning more serious he said: "We have gone through several wars and difficult times. My family coped well during the war since we stayed together. The residents here are very strong and resilient."

In different situations I spent with Tal and his family other advantages of military service surfaced in their talk than national ideology and patriotism. These were more oriented towards the realisation of one's potential or pride in ther participation in elite units. "In the army you get friends for life, you learn expressions and slang you will not learn elsewhere. I pity those who don't get the opportunity to serve in the army for religious or other reasons. It is not so cool to do the alternative civilian service," Tal explained to me.

However, on another visit to the Chackotay family, during the build- up to the war on Gaza, his identification with the army seemed to have hardened. I asked Tal about the possibility for future peace and he burst defensively into a ten-minute uninterrupted praise of the IDF and adopting the stereotypical media image of Palestinians as terrorists. He claimed that the IDF had never initiated a war, just responded to real attacks and threats. As long as the Palestinians and Arabs were not willing to make real peace, there would be none. "How can you talk to terrorists, to people who blow themselves up? We are the Israel Defence Forces. *Hagana* (defence) is our mission, to protect our people and land. There is no alternative (*ein breira),"* he said with the affirming and standard voice of a conscripted soldier. Tal's fixation on innocence was striking. He reproduced a friend/enemy division within Israel, in which he accused anyone criticizing military action against Hamas or Hezbollah as an enemy within. He portrayed Arabs as enemies and Israel wholly part of the West, its vanguard in the Middle East.[107] Tal seemed to imply that only I as an outsider could have asked such a naïve and ignorant question about peace. The discourse of terror was clearly influenced by Yeshivat Hesder where he had learned that military values combined with

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[107]The promotion of Western superiority or cultural intolerance is observably not unique or case-specific to Israel. The same concepts governed the British Empire and dictated relations between the French and its colonies in North Africa and Lebanon. It is also an underlying concept of the modern day constructed "clash of civilisations" thesis: the assertive promotion of the modern, secular West versus the backward, religious-fundamentalist East (Shabi 2010:22).

religious beliefs were conducive to a secure and orderly society. Tal's support for colonial practices of occupation and warfare became an expression of national loyalty and an aspiration to upward social mobility.

In regard to the Galilee region, previous anthropological research has approached the subject of local identity through the analysis of local symbols and sacred rituals (Ben-Ari and Bilu 1997). Sosis and Handwerker (2011) show how religious women who remained in northern Israel during the Lebanon war in 2006, coped with the stress of war and its terrors by reciting psalms. What I witnessed in the months preceding and during the War on Gaza suggested that religion not only played an important role in reducing anxiety but was also used as a source of strength for Israelis from various backgrounds. In between wars various populations held competing claims for Israeliness, while during war, religion was used as a unifying factor in order to instill hope and strength.

In October in Kiryat Shemona, Yeshivat Hesder arranged a processional presentation of a Torah scroll in memory of Liran Saadia and David Amar, two soldiers from Kiryat Shemona who were killed in the Second Lebanon War in 2006. I went outdoors with Rahamim and Esther as the procession passed by their house. Rahamim put on his kippah and hugged and kissed the Torah scroll as it was passed around the crowd. In addition to members and relatives of the bereaved families and locals from Kiryat Shemona, secular kibbutznikim and soldiers posted in the north also joined the procession. The procession united members of the diverse frontier population to cope with the existential anxiety that arose during uncertain conditions before a war. The memory of the two dead soldiers was used to strengthen the spirit and steadfastness of the entire frontier population. By linking personal loss to the central myths of heroic sacrifice and national regeneration, the residents of Kiryat Shemona and the Northern region moved themselves from a stigmatised periphery to a national frontier. The commemoration of the dead in the build up to war, allowed people of the region to ignore, avoid and forget the issues that divided them. Residents of Kiryat Shemona saw themselves as united with Israelis of various backgrounds and the uncomfortable reality of their structurally stuck position in the ethnocracy was temporarily irrelevant. The notion of siege, perpetuated by the state, deeply resonated in times of geo-political unrest, and provided the social cohesion necessary for war.

Figure 16. Public procession of a Torah scroll in Kiryat Shemona October 2008.

National unity during war

The Israeli government said the need to defend its citizens in Sderot was the motive for launching aerial and ground attacks on Gaza on December 27th 2008, the first major Israeli military offensive since the Second Lebanon War in 2006. During wartime, a heightened sense of national unity was felt nationally and in the town and reisdents invested more emotional energy in the symbols of nationhood.[108] Both individuals and representatives from the municipality decorated the town with banners with slogans such as "We are all IDF" and "We love *Tzahal*" (Hebrew acronym for the IDF) idealising the warrior image of the soldiers and boosting their morale. Blue and white Israeli flags were flown on balconies, streets and in social media profiles. The local value of 'strength' was now more intensely performed in self-nationalisation processes where Kiryat Shemona residents demonstrated their support for the nation.

Chief Rabbi Drori held a public prayer for soldiers serving in Gaza. Members of the Yeshivat Hesder moved their prayer ceremonies from the synagogue to the public city square so that residents could join. A 20 meter green banner divided the square between the praying congregation and the public. Benny, whose son Tal was serving in Gaza, stood in the midst of the crowd murmuring and praying and putting on the *tefillin*,

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[108] According to a poll conducted by Channel 10, 81 percent of Israelis supported the war on Gaza.

winding the black leather thongs around his left arm. The rabbi underlined the strategic importance of Kiryat Shemona as an outpost against hostile Arabs, and encouraged the listeners to strenghten their religiousity and observance and remember Jewish sacrifice and heroism of the past. He finished with a special prayer for Gilad Shalit, thus elevating him from his status as a regular soldier to an almost divine status as a Zionist symbol.

Early on the morning of January 14th 2009, I was awakened by the siren alert for incoming rockets, the *tzeva adom* (red code). Immediately understanding that it was a serious situation, I stayed in my bedroom which was the fortified room of the Zakay house. It was built from solid concrete with a tiny window at the top and gave a false promise of protection. Shortly after, I heard a large sound of rockets followed by distant explosions. Feeling upset and anxious, I turned on the television to listen to the latest news. I heard a voice calling from outside and someone knocking at the door. It was Rahamim who said that I could no longer stay in my flat but that I had to evacuate to their basement which was a proper bomb shelter. The young couple from upstairs had already joined them. The floors were covered with rugs and some green plants were placed in the corner. It was clear that they had spent time in this room before. Esther was clearly upset and so was their neighbour's wife, shaking and hugging her husband who tried to calm her down. Like in southern Israel, life was heavily disrupted by rocket fire. All schools, businesses and factories closed shortly after the sirens sounded.

Although I had prepared myself for a 'situation under fire', I had conflicting feelings about the situation I found myself in. I was in Kiryat Shemona as a civilian and now I felt the fear that my informants had talked about so many times. I knew that there was a chance an attack could happen, especially after the massive military attack on Gaza. The rockets landing near Kiryat Shemona were described as a solidarity attack by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Esther and Rahamim were curious to know my reaction and they sought sympathy for their attitude. "You see, you never know with those Arabs!" Esther said. They agreed that I was very strong, like an Israeli, since I had not panicked. After an hour of silence, we went back upstairs and watched the latest news coverage. The sounds we all had heard were when the IDF had responded by firing six artillery shells. We all remained indoors that day, watching the news. A local reporter broadcasted live from the main street of the town. Although presented as helpless and passive, the residents felt that the government was finally putting their suffering on the national agenda. "We are the news", Rahamim said

excitedly. "Now, we feel like we are a part of the nation".

I was surprised by Rahamim's excitement during this highly stressful event. It seemed like he enjoyed being at the centre of public attention, even if the occasion was tragic and it meant staying in the bomb shelter. Paradoxically, it was media coverage pointing towards the vulnerability of the Mizrahi border towns which made the residents feel stronger and more valued. Although the focus was mostly on Sderot during the War on Gaza, residents in Kiryat Shemona felt empowered by the increased public attention given to the border towns. They supported the war and fighting despite the suffering they faced because it momentarily blurred the image of a stigmatised periphery and enhanced the perception that they were a central frontier.

Being at the frontier rather, than a periphery, can also generate material benefits. During the war, tens of millions of shekels were distributed to local authorities in border regions. However, the estimated cost of Operation Cast Lead was 500 million NIS for each day of fighting. This required budgetary cuts elsewhere, including those aimed at developing the infrastructure in the northern and southern peripheries. Thus, despite the communal attempt of avoiding the image of a periphery during wartime, the economic cost of war further marginalised the peripheral population (Tzfadia 2011:118).

The online battlefield

In the early years of the Internet, it was believed that it would contribute to the fragmentation of populations and breakdown of stable national identities. However, the Internet has also emerged as a major medium for the flagging of nationhood. The online, social networking website *Facebook* has become a key arena for demonstrating one's national sympathies. Posting a political message or exhibiting a nationalist symbol as one's profile picture is a frequent phenomenon. The users of Facebook can chose to share information with the public or restrict it to their network of friends. I have been registered as a user since 2007, and during this time I have witnessed how national identities have been fixed and become fetishised online, particularly during times of crises.[109]

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[109] The day after the massacre and bombings in Oslo by a white anti-Islam extremist on 22th July 2011, more than half of my Norwegian Facebook friends changed their profile picture into an 'I love Oslo' logo. The use of Facebook helped to conserve and strengthen the concept of regional and national

During the war on Gaza, supporters of Israel posted Israeli flags, whereas supporters of the Palestinians posted a candle or the message "We are all-Gaza". Shortly after the Israeli invasion of Gaza in December 2008, nationalist gestures and reactions increased on Facebook. The power and immediacy of the online battlefield became particularly evident as profile pictures of flags and various slogans were uploaded. Supporters of the Palestinians posted profile pictures of Palestinian flags or slogans such as "we are all Gaza" or a stroller symbolizing children being attacked by the Israeli military.

Figure 17.   Facebook campaigns and slogans against the Israeli military offensive in Gaza.

During the Israeli war on Gaza, a female informant aged 25 from Kiryat Shemona, uploaded a satirical image on her Facebook site. Israel's national emergency service, The Red Star of David (*Magen David Adom)* was changed into a red national flag accompanied by the words "the Red Army". The rhetoric reflected the view that only the Israeli Defence Forces can prevent emergency and disaster. Militaristic ethno-nationalism was promoted even through images that mocked official discourse.

identity, while having a unifying effect for a grieving nation.

Figure 18. "The Red Army."

Another patriotic Israeli initiative was the "qassamcount" (http://apps.facebook.com/qassamcount/). Those wanting to help raise awareness about Hamas- fired rockets hitting Israel were encouraged to donate their Facebook Status. The statuses were automatically updated with the number of Qassams hitting Israel[110].

Nationalist gestures on Facebook and reactions to them increased during the War on Gaza. My personal Facebook page became the site of much heated conversation, as friends of both Israeli-Jewish and Arab backgrounds were involved in mutual accusation and blame. A colleague from the LSE posted a critical comment on my 'wall' condemning the war on Gaza. Within a few hours the list of counter arguments had grown very long. A middle-class friend from Tel-Aviv, a lawyer and IDF soldier, wrote in response that "we have the right to defend ourselves", invoking the theme that the war was nationally justified as a response to an existential threat. A girl I knew from KS wrote that the army should "finish the job no matter how long it would take". A few of the Jewish American students I had befriended in the Haifa ulpan were concerned for my personal safety and posted "come south!" reflecting the perception that only the border areas were unsafe.

On the 25th of June 2009, I noticed that the majority of my Israeli Facebook friends had replaced their profile pictures with photographs of the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and had changed their status updates to add the text: "…has been waiting for Gilad Shalit for two years." More than 85,000 Facebook users changed their profile photo and status. A Facebook search for 'Gilad Shalit' a year later in 2010, unearthed more than 200 results. "Gilad is still alive" one group stated, borrowing the main slogan of the Gilad campaign. "Bring Gilad Shalit Home!" another group demanded.

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[110] By Friday 9th January 2009 the application had 163,291 registered users.

Figure 19. "Gilad Shalit is still alive."

When I asked an informant why he had changed his profile picture to that of Gilad, he said that he felt it was his duty as a former Israeli soldier. "I served in the Lebanon war and Gilad could have been me. As a soldier, you want to be sure that the government will be behind you. I think that they are not doing enough to bring the soldiers back. This group will also send signals to Israeli society, that we have to fight together." Yiftach identified himself as a soldier and for him it was that link which allowed him to claim an 'us'.

An extensively planned *hasbara* (propaganda) campaign of public advocacy started in the months leading up to the war. The Israeli government established a Sderot Media Centre with the stated purpose "of uncovering the voices of a population marginalised by the conflict: the residents of Sderot and the Western Negev who suffer daily from the terror of Qassam attacks."[111] During the war itself, the media centre and the IDF effectively silenced other narratives and controlled the public interpretation of the war. In order to prevent leaks from soldiers and officers, the IDF ordered a ban on cell phones. Reporters from all major national and international networks broadcast from the hilltops and streets of Sderot but with few images to show the world.

The Israeli media contributed to the construction of crisis and collective anxiety. They fed the public with terrifying reports and security analyses about the arms build up by Hamas and Israel was presented as in danger of annihilation. At the same time,

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[111] Today, the Sderot Media Centre claims to represent "close to one million people living in southern Israel under the threat of Gaza rockets." (http://www.sderotmedia.com/, accessed on 16th March 2009).

media channels limited reporting on the suffering in Gaza. The major rightwing daily newspaper Israel HaYom reported how the IDF made every effort not to hurt civilians and reported that Hamas was using Palestinians as human shields. The front page showed a photo of soldiers preparing for war and "working like slaves" (Israel Haiom, 08/01/09). According to a study of the first days of media coverage of the war by a liberal but non-partisan group called Keshev, the Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel, the Israeli news media was filled with "feelings of self-righteousness and a sense of catharsis following what was felt to be undue restraint in the face of attacks by the enemy" (Nytimes accessed on the 13th January 08).

During the war, I watched news coverage on Channel 2 with the Zakay family. The reporter standing in Kiryat Shemona said that the residents were prepared for the worst. Kiryat Shemona was portrayed as a war zone, when it in reality was a normal and mundane day. It compared the population in Sderot with the past sufferings in Kiryat Shemona. Journalists from Ashkelon and Naharia sent back reports of Qazzam and other rocket attacks and how many people were being treated for shock. The only image broadcast from Gaza was of a demolished minaret immersed in grey smoke.

The war, referred to as the Gaza Massacre by Palestinians, caused outrage in the Arab world. It received international condemnation and criticism for the indiscriminate firing and civilians casualties that occurred on a massive scale. However, this did not influence the general public view of the moral righteousness of the military campaign.[112] In my ulpan class, a fellow student referred to Norway as a antisemitic country since two Norwegian doctors working in a hospital in Gaza at the time reported what they were witnesseing. The Israeli State accused the international media of just showing the Palestinian perspective. A frontpage headline in *Yediot Aharonot*, the country's largest selling daily newspaper, expressed very well the popular view through the intentional misspelling of a Hebrew word, which turned the headline "World Media" into "World Liars".

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[112] A minority was openly against the war from the start. The columnist Gideon Levy wrote in Haaretz that "Not since the summer of 1967, have we had such a uniform, brainwashed chorus, and back then it was not so nationalist and bestial, insensitive and blind".

'X-plain' moral righteousness

Humour and satire were also part of the media strategy to deal with the War on Gaza. The tremendously popular satirical TV show *Eretz Nehederet* (A Wonderful Country) on Channel 2, is presented as a news show that summarises the events of that week in Israel. The rap duo 'X-plain' satirised the country's efforts to explain to the world its position during the war on Gaza.[113]

Figure 20. "I wake up in the morning and suddenly fall on me rocket."

This video became wellknown amongst my informants. The 'victims' from the periphery were half-naked women and the rappers were racially stereotyped as *"arsim"*. This Hebrew slang term illustrates a negative stereotype related to lower class Mizrahi

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[113] "I wake up in the morning and suddenly fall on me til (rocket) - explain- how would you feel if someone throws on you til (rocket)? Not for this did we built a Jewish homeland, the children in the South sit in MMD (acronym: shelter) can't go to (grocery store) can't go to school, but you don't understand because you live happily in hul (abroad). How would you feel, if in Paris they throw on you til? You ask for a croissant, but instead they throw on you til! Our army is the most moral army in the world, well at least one of the five most moral of them all, if you push us, then maybe…we can reach a compromise on the "*most moral army in the region"*. They throw on us (rockets) so we come with (airplanes), but remember who started to shoot on ezrahim (civilians) how would you feel if in London they shot on civilians? You want to cruise in the Thames but instead they shoot on civilians. If you ask why we fight we say they started. If you ask why we bomb, we say they started. If you ask what we want we say…erm. It's so hard when there is "red alert" (code signal for incoming rockets) we have to give shelter to (female) refugees from the south. They go naked in the house; they are so (poor) because a rocket has hit their closet room. Support us, or we take (back) *Israeli football player from Liverpool*. Take Bar Rafaeli (model) leaves Leo with nothing, let's see him dating with Um Kul Tum (old Arab singer). Look on us, look on them. Who is more similar to you? Us! We have McDonalds and soon H&M they don't even have (subway type chain). If you won't support us, you leave us with no choice, we'll remind you what took place in the European past. "Fire, brothers, fire!" (Famous poem about the Holocaust). I think we made our point clear, I hope you know how it feels when someone throws on you til. Yo, yo, explain, Support US, Hate Them."

Jews, usually of Moroccan, Persian or Yemeni descent.[114] The *ars* wears a 'wife beater' t-shirt and golden chains, he listens to *muzika mizrahit* (literally oriental music which draws on Arab melodies) and typically votes for right wing parties. The loud *arsim* belong to the lower socio-economic rank or they are 'nouveau riche' able to demonstrate wealth through consumption, but lacking a proper education and cultural capital.

The video satirised how mainstream Israeli media presented border Mizrahim as passive victims and how *arsim* temporarily became the national symbol for steadfastness in Israeli society. It jokes about how the vulgar suddenly become the civilised. It can also be analysed as a satire of peripheral nationhood and the simultaneous aspiration towards Western values, symbolized by McDonalds and H&M. However, the use of humour and stereotypes can also reinforce a feeling of both national and Ashkenazi self-righteousness. Satire during war times becomes a part of the mainstream media strategy, rather than playing the role of criticism.

The front page of *Yediot Aharanot* on 18th January 2009, showed how the public had regained new faith in the strength of the army through the war on Gaza. Israeli soldiers in a tank returned from Gaza accompanied with the word 'victory' in bold letters. The frontpage of the free daily newspaper, Israel HaYom, on the same day also showed returning Israeli soldiers waving the Israeli flag.[115] The bold title reads "finished and not fulfilled". Olmert referred to the twenty-two day long war as "a brilliant operation". A picture of Gilad accompanied by the question "and what about Gilad?" reinforced the perception that the war was not over.

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[114] Mizrahi men prominently play roles of violent and criminal characters in Israeli cinema. They are also stereotypically constructed as quintessentially emotional: on the one hand violent and criminal and on the other warm, familial and affectionate (Shoat 1989:122).

[115] In 2009, Israel HaYom, a newspaper with a rightwing pro-Likud profile, had the second largest daily circulation in Israel.

Figure 21. Front Page of Israel HaYom 18/01/09.

Tal had doubted the national leadership after the 'failure' in the Lebanon war in 2006. When he returned from Gaza, he told me that previous disappointments over the army had faded and he confirmed the unifying function of war. "This war made us believe in our country again."

Conclusion

Existential insecurity was an ordinary situation in the context of an Israeli border town. Whereas my informants expressed great mistrust in their elected officials, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) was praised as the keeper of the Israeli future capable of reducing fears. Politicians, army officers and religious leaders exalted in the courage of the local residents who stayed in their towns and thus felt that they had a moral right to continue fighting. The media aligned the border towns to the central regions and portrayed the peripheral Mizrahim as key members in the moral legitimisation of war. The residents' local sense of place was narrated and experienced, particularly in relation to the centre. Placed at the geographical and socio-economic margins of Israeli society, they utilised the concept of 'strength' to deal with borderland anxieties. Self-fashioning as strong balanced the tension between the esteemed role of the development towns in the frontier ethos and their actual deprivation. By arguing that a sense of strength in Kiryat Shemona was different from other regions and countries, they created a distinct local

and moral identity for themselves while simultaneously supporting national unity.

Peripheral nationhood is reflected in the practices and narratives by which peripheral communites consolidate a sense of collective local belonging through juxtaposing their own histories, affiliations and sentiments with official state discourses. In Kiryat Shemona, this was done by envoking notions of 'strength' and supranational civilizations. Self-fashioning as anti-Arab and anti-Muslim also linked them to the globalised West fighting the evil of Muslim terrorism. Remaining in town during war became an act of pioneering patriotism, not only an expression of ethnocratic exclusion. The border Mizrahim appeared as central members of the nation during wartime. Their desire to inhabit a frontier strengthened militaristic ethno-nationalism and settler-colonial control over territory and peripheral minorities. Warfare and an imagined 'horizontal comradeship' became a temporary way to undermine the ethnocracy symbolically. A comparison can be made with the empowerment of women during the Second World War. The conscription of men into the military services made it necessary for women to leave their homes and replace or supplement their men as breadwinners. When the war was over, the traditional gendered division of labour resumed and the women returned to their subordinate position. In the aftermath of war, the Mizrahi ethno-class faded from the national agenda and sank back into their multiple and competing loyalties of family, class, religion and region. The Mizrahi ethno-class paradoxically benefit from a permanent situation of warfare and the increased militarisation of Israeli society.

Chapter 5

Threathening Others: the Dynamics of Prejudice in Everyday Life

This chapter elaborates further on the process of marking boundaries and categories from the perspective and daily experience of Mizrahim. The Euro-civilisational discourse that stresses the relevance of a shared Western culture in relation to national identity profoundly shaped how Mizrahi residents differentiated themselves from Russian and Arab others in narratives and practice. The Mizrahim, having suffered under a lack of public recognition for their Judeo-Arabic identity and culture, re-deployed the oriental stigma and colonial racism in their descriptions of Arab and Russian others. As such they were reproducing the 'quasi-western' character of Israeliness as defined by Ashkenazim. However, they were challenging the secular character of dominant Israeliness, by identifying themselves as traditional and doubting the Jewishness and morality of Russian others. By rejecting the secular identity that is shared by most Israelis, religion and morality became an effective path to negotiate their position in society. There were differences in the stigmatised reaction to an internal other (the Russians) and external others (the Arabs). Russians were included as essential members of the Zionist nation-building and vital for Israel's future existence as a Jewish state, but the Russian's Jewishness and morals were the object of doubt. Attitudes and stereotypes directed towards non-Jewish Arab others, despite individual friendships and relations, were characterized by feelings of suspicion and superiority, racism and exclusion.

The absorption of FSU immigrants and their challenge to Mizrahim

Israel loves immigration, but does not like immigrants. (Israeli proverb)

The Israeli State was based on an immigrant settler society and is engaged in the settlement process to this very day (Kimmerling 2008:176). The story of Exodus as a story of moral ascent continues to resonate as *aliyah* or 'ascension'. It is the foundation of the national claim and the founding myth that Jews were returning to their 'historic homeland'. The Law of Return states that the entire Jewish collectivity, non-residents

and non-citizen Diaspora Jews included, are entitled to settle in Israel and obtain full citizenship rights.

Since the late 1980s more than a million Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union (FSU) have made aliyah. Their arrival brought about a significant change in Israel's demographic landscape and today they make up about 17%, or nearly one-sixth of the Israeli population (Central Bureau of Statistics 2005). [116] The Israeli elites have welcomed mass immigration as a valuable demographic contribution to the Zionist goal of maintaining a Jewish majority over the Palestinians, of preserving a secular majority over a growing ultra-Orthodox population, and of reinforcing the aspiration for a European dominated culture (Tzfadia & Yiftachel 2003:47). The Law of Return has likewise been used to restrict the migration or settlement of undesirable non-western or non-white migrants, often without making explicit mention of race or specific ethnicities (Veranachi 2006:22). [117] The predominately Western (white) character of Russian immigration to Israel resulted from the fact that there was no strict policy governing those who were suspected of not being properly Jewish.

Israel's preference for Russian Jewish immigration was already evident in the 1970s when the immigrants were offered financial and social benefits to ease them into Israeli life. [118] This contrasted sharply with the neglect of Mizrahim in working-class towns and neighbourhoods. Unlike the Soviet immigration to Israel in the 1970s, the FSU immigrants of the 1990s were not motivated by Zionist ideology or by any particular desire to live in Israel for religious or other reasons. They were primarily driven by pragmatic rather than ideological considerations, and by push rather than pull factors. The push factors included the drastically worsening economic, social and political conditions and the increase in the open expressions of anti-Semitism with Russia upon the collapse of the USSR (Remenick 2007). Generally speaking the Russian emigrants of the 1990s were highly educated and mostly secular (Al-Haj 2004).

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[116] The largest aliyah occurred between 1990-1996 when over 600,000 immigrants arrived.

[117] Ethiopian Jews immigrating during the early 1990s were generally treated much harsher. Families were separated and only those recognised as Jewish were granted citizenship. Ethiopian Jews have been forced to undergo acts of symblic re-circumcision in order to be recognized as Jews according to the *halakhic* defintion of Jewishness (Stasiulis & Yuval-Davis 1995:309).The failed attempts of the Igbo people of Nigeria to be recognised as Jews by the Israeli rabbinate illustrate a group who currently are excluded from aliyah rights (Bodenheimer in Haaretz 31/12/11, accessed on 3th January 2012).

[118] The immigrants were enthusiastically greeted by Prime Minister Golda Meir. "Once again, real Jews are coming here. These are people of a superior caste who will give us heroes," she reportedly said on national TV (Shabani 2009:197).

Many preferred emigrating to the West, preferably to the United States. The US restricted post-cold war Russian immigration to 50,000 a year, and most emigrants were directed to Israel (ibid: 311).

The Ashkenazi establishment, who once had labelled Jews from Arab and Muslim countries as Mizrahim, ascribed an ethnic label to the Russians, who emerged as a distinct ethnic category characterised by a shared language. In contrast to the neglect of Mizrahim in the 1950s, starting in 1989, the Russian newcomers received an aliyah package of financial benefits for a limited period to cover all social and housing needs. The process of de-Arabisation and Judaisation, is preserved and reproduced today in the manner of settlement by immigrants. Russian immigrants obtained cheap housing in the Galilee and Negev where they were exploited by the state for the project of Judaisation (Tzfadia 2011:42).[119] The process to colonise Palestinian land was also strengthened as immigrants could gain access to settlements established in the occupied territories. This demonstrates how the dominant ethno-national community used immigration policies as a colonial practice to maintain or achieve territorial control. As such, there are clear continuities between the historical practices of settler-colonial Zionism and settler-colonial forms of control today.

Around 130,000 Russians, especially from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, settled for cheap public housing in peripheral development towns (Central Bureau of Statistics 1998). The FSU immigrants found themselves in development towns and working-class communities on the lower tiers of the Israeli structure where they typically met people from other disadvantaged groups such as Moroccans, Yemenites, Ethiopians and less-educated Ashkenazi Jews (Rebhun & Waxman 2004:65). The immigrants often held higher-status occupations in their country of origin than the average Jewish population in Israel. Now they had to compete with these groups in the labour market for scarce jobs and most of the immigrants experienced some downward occupational mobility (Smooha 1993, Tzfadia 2000).

Unemployment and economic hardship were less spectacular sources of insecurity than unsettling rocket attacks and war but were still great worries in town. Labour competition was intensified by a sense of relative deprivation and neglect amongst Mizrahim, both in relation to the Ashkenazi elites and to the Russian newcomers. The withdrawal of the welfare state has increased competition for between

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[119] The Likud government under Ariel Sharon's leadership spent $ 5 billion on the construction of 140,000 apartments, mostly on state peripheries.

the underprivileged for status, recognition and rights. In a context of increased competition for scarce jobs, categories of belonging such as Jewishness, Israeliness and Mizrahiut (Easterness) become consequential when linked to the politics of redistribution (Belbard 2005:4). Israeli citizens, who are vulnerable to the impact and disappearance of the welfare state are particularly opposed to the dilution of the religious and national components of Jewish identity for the state and its citizens (Lehmann & Siebzehner 2006).

Russian pride and Arab stigma

The FSU immigrants arrived in Israel when neo-liberal policies and values were on the increase. The socio-economic transformation created some acceptance for alternative visions of national identity (Ram 1998, Shafir & Peled 1998). The norms were different, but not contradictory to the core Zionist ideology that aspires to have a single, modern culture among the Jews and to combine secular Jewish heritage with Western culture (Smooha 1993:71). In the Zionist discourse on national identity, the Russians (even non-Jews) are considered culturally closer to Ashkenazim than Mizrahim.

The *klita* (absorption) of the Russian immigrants was successful according to the Zionist goal of 'ingathering the exiles', but it did not succeed in instilling a homogenous culture. Though interested and often ready to adopt Israeli habits, culture and values, the Russian Jews did not give up their own. There is still a strong ethnic attachment among Russian communities that challenges the very logic of mono-cultural hegemony (Kimmerling 1999:64). They have their own thriving press, access of Russian TV, conduct after-school classes to teach Russian and live in predominantly Russian neighbourhoods (Golden 2001). They seem eager to preserve their Russian identity, which makes them feel a part of the country's Western-oriented Ashkenazi elite (Remenick 2007). In contrast to Mizrahim who were forced to distance themselves from their Arabness, FSU immigrants regard their Russian origins as an immense advantage and seek through their pride in Russian language and culture, to higher status and power. The founding and success of two immigrant parties with a clear Russian character, the right-wing parties *Yisrael b'Aliyah* (Israel in Immigration/Ascendance) and *Yisrael Beitenu* (Israel our Home), further reinforces the ethno-cultural boundaries

around a constructed Russian community (Shafir & Peled 2002:317).[120]

The mass immigration of Russian-speaking immigrants, Ethiopian Jews and several hundred thousand foreign workers has led to a growing acceptance of multilingualism and challenges the hegemony of Hebrew. The Russian immigrants of the 70s felt the need to hide their mark-of-origin accents when speaking Hebrew. This has changed significantly during the last two decades. When I conducted fieldwork in there existed one commercial Russian TV channel, one public service Russian radio station, two commercial Russian radio stations, and around ten Russian-language newspapers.[121] Several Russians I met from an older generation said that they preferred to go to Russian-speaking dentists, doctors or hairdressers. In Kiryat Shemona, literature evenings were arranged at the community centre and Russian bookshops flourished as they do elsewhere in Israel. Many help-lines, such as those for national travel information, had recorded menus in three languages: Hebrew, English and Russian. Cyrillic scripts were seen alongside Hebrew on ingredients lists and instruction leaflets for household items (Shabi 2009:134). The demand for recognising Russian as a third official language, alongside Hebrew and Arabic, has already been voiced.[122] Many former or recent FSU immigrants are convinced that European, and especially Russian culture, is vastly superior to Israeli culture.[123] The success stories of members from the Russian communities in politics, science, high-tech and sports give credence to this conviction (Shafir & Peled 2002:320).

Musical tastes are part of an elaborate hierarchy of symbolic capital that represents and reinforces social divisions in Israeli society. In the local ulpan, Russian students were taught countless Israeli songs as part of the process of learning the language and to nurture national sentiment. When Judith sang enthusiastically at the top of her lungs, the musical score was solely Eastern European and mostly modernised old Russian, Polish and Yiddish tunes. A Russian student in class was thrilled to recognise an old Israeli lullaby that turned out to be translated from Russian into Hebrew. We

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[120] They have provided a swing vote in several national elections since their arrival since they tend to vote for right-wing parties and candidates (Horowitz 2003).

[121] The Russian TV-channel is called Israel Plus and the radio station Reka. The Russian newspaper, The Courier, is published daily.

[122] Russian cultural commentators say that, aside from the sheer size of this community in Israel, one potential reason for this strong linguistic tradition is the reliance on newspapers and the dramatic arts, at a time when mainstream Soviet sources were rigidly conformist (Shabi 2009:134).

[123] The achievements were frequently highlighted in national media throughout my fieldwork. During the Beijing Olympics in 2008, nearly half of Israel's Olympic team were immigrants from the former Soviet Union. An advertisement for an immigrant organization showed the Israeli kayak rower, Michael Kalganov, originally form Uzbekistan, accompanied by the Israeli flag.

were not only singing the nation-state into existence, but also reinforcing Israel's cultural hierarchy by singing songs composed for the tastes of the Ashkenazi founding pioneers. The Eurocentrism of Israeli popular culture was an obvious paradox in Kiryat Shemona where *muzika mirahit* (literally 'oriental' music), which draws on Arab rhythms, melodies and styles, was enormously popular.

All this public display of Russia and its political power is a reflection of pride in this community. Such public confirmation is glaringly absent in the Arab-language sector, even though Jews of Arab background are a larger community than the Russians. A population that ought to treasure a strong linguistic tradition openly, which is praised by intellectuals for its depth and scope, does not feel able to do so in the Jewish State (Shabi 2010:134). When Zionism was forming its collective memory, Judeo-Arabic culture and Arabness were deemed inferior, not part of the Jewish nation. The new Sabra Hebrew was de-Semitised in accent and rhythm, illustrating the settlers' Eurocentric biases (Shoat in Lavie 1996:67). Mizrahim were forced to suppress their Arabic language because it was considered uncivilised by the Ashkenazi elite. Many Mizrahim themselves share this dominant, pejorative view of the Arabic language and have actively chosen not to teach it to their children. In Kiryat Shemona, older Mizrahi residents spoke Hebrew with an accent closer to its original guttural sounds, a strong reminder of the resemblance between the two Semitic languages. Arabic is the official language alongside Hebrew but it functions as such almost exclusively at the declarative level. As the prime identity marker for the Palestinian minority and Arab nationalism, it plays a minor role in the national Hebrew-dominated public sphere (Amara 2006:3). The marginalisation of the Arabic language and culture reflects the Zionist aspiration towards a European and Western nationality.

However, Russian otherness has developed into many pejorative stereotypes that are widely used in formal and informal discourse. Examples are pork-eaters, sausage aliyah, AIDS-carriers, alcoholics, Mafiosi, prostitutes, parasites and even Bolsheviks (Prilutskii 2003 in Fialkova & Yelenevskaya 2007:3). The stereotype of the Russian with blond hair and blue eyes painfully resonates with the way Russian-speaking immigrants are depicted sometimes in the Israeli media as 'too white', that is, non-Jewish or not Jewish enough (Golden 2003:161). Paradoxically, some of the attitudes towards Russian immigrants in Israel resemble the precarious status of Jews in Russia as mistrusted others (Remenick 2007:9).

The image of Russian others in personal narratives

The factors mentioned above have contributed to the exclusionary attitudes my Mizrahi informants often expressed against Russian-speaking Israelis. Many felt that the Russians undermined the Mizrahi majority and posed a threath to the traditional character of the town and put at risk their social position and political control. The newcomers were ignorant of existing values, culturally different and represented an economic burden to an already neglected city. The Russians were accused of 'sticking to themselves' and of having a weak emotional attachment to the place. Mizrahi informants criticised the Russian community's lack of religious observance, in contrast to their own more traditional (*masoriti*) religious lifestyle.[124] They emphasised the importance of strong ties with the extended family and respect for traditional gender roles, both of which were considered weaker amongst the Russians (and Ashkenazim). Many complained about the 'noise' and the foreign language they did not understand. Even in the context of the rise to power of the ultra-nationalistic political party Yisrael Beitenu, Russians were accused of being untrustworthy Zionists with suspicious motives for doing aliyah. My ulpan teacher Judith confirmed this commonly held view when she once told a story about Russians who had benefited from financial assistance through aliyah programs and then returned to Russia in order to join in that economic rise as an example of weak national devotion. When immigrants returned to Russia or moved elsewhere, they rejected the future of the Jewish nation and were thus conceived as disloyal national subjects.

Story-telling, stereotypes and narratives of prejudice and exclusion can be analysed as elements of what Billig (1995) has termed banal nationalism or taken-for-granted views about specific nations and their representatives which are constructed and reproduced in everyday life. The very banality of stereotyping and story-telling as part of nationalism means that it is rarely openly confrontational. Nevertheless, such practices may serve to establish or conceal relations of power and dominance between the interlocutors.

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[124] Although religious tradition is considered a way of life, many Mizrahim are pragmatic in their interpretation and observance of strict prohibitions and they watch television or drive after attending synagogue on the Sabbath (Smooha 1993:167).

Playing the religious card

In daily practice and conversation, my informants laid claim to Israeliness and challenged the Israeliness and Jewishness of differentiated others. Rahamim bitterly explained his sense of neglect and resentment when we met at a local café.

> In general I would say that we are happy that new immigrants would like to come and live in Israel as we need them. But lately there are people coming to Israel for the wrong reasons. They want to convert to Judaism, but just for financial benefits. It is sometimes hard for us when we see the new immigrants, many of them not even proper Jewish, receiving everything. When I served the army in the seventies I received nothing (klom)! Now the new immigrants get all kinds of benefits and special treatments. Those who came first leave Israel to make a better future for themselves in the US or other places, and the new immigrants receive all the national benefits. It is not fair.

Rahamim expressed frustration because of the benefits and financial assistance the Russian newcomers had received, resources that he believed rightfully belonged to those who had made a national sacrifice. His narrative, laced with hostility towards the Russians, was still supportive of the well-reagarded Zionist valuation of immigration. However, like many others, he doubted the Russians' claims to Jewishness and motivations for converting to Judaism. Comparing his own experience with immigrant absorption, he mocked their sense of hardship. Elaborating in detail on his military service, he claimed that he had made a long-standing sacrifice to the nation-state, which many of the Russian newcomers had not.

Itzik Zagory, in his mid-60, emigrated from the city of Mogador in Morocco to Israel when he was sixteen in 1963. His brother had already arrived in Israel in 1956 as a part of the *aliyah ha-Noar* (youth aliyah). Not having seen her sons for seven years, his mother convinced the rest of the nuclear family to emigrate. Itzik's uncle did not want to immigrate to Israel and left for Montreal, Canada instead, where they live today. Despite not being enrolled in a formal Hebrew program, Itzik quickly 'picked' it up on the streets. He went to high school in KS and took a course in electronics. Like the vast majority of Israelis of that time, he served in the army and the military reserves for a shorter period every year as required by Israeli law. He married a local Moroccan

Jewish woman and had three children. He found a job in an electronics store and in the late 1980s he founded a music shop where he has been self-employed ever since. Like the Chackotay family he had acquired middle class membership by establishing a small business.[125]

His shop used to be popular but now most of his customers were from the surrounding kibbutzim or soldiers staying temporarily because 'few people in town had money'. During the Lebanon war in 2006, he maintained his work routine in his shop, which was located on the main street, nicknamed 'rocket alley' during the war. He believed that the economic development and creation of new jobs would improve people's coping capabilities. "People who are working have less time for worrying." He had recently paid for the wedding of his son and worried about the economic future for his family. His economic worries can explain why he was suspicious about the Russians, who were potential competitors in the labour market. This concern can be illustrated by a conversation that unfolded at his store one October afternoon.

Itzik was sitting contentedly in a large armchair behind the counter with his feet propped up on a smaller chair, watching television. I knocked on the wall and he walked up to me and smiled, clearly glad that I had interrupted his idleness. Drinking coffee and chatting about his day, I asked if he could share his views on Russian aliayh. Like Rahamim, Itzik expressed his concern for the Russians' weak Judaism, claiming that only a minority of the immigrants were properly Jewish. He jokingly said that the Russian immigration had made Israel less Jewish religiously and more Christian. He contrasted their weak Jewishness with his own strong Jewish roots, tracing his lineage back more than 200 years. He claimed that the descendants of Jews who had mixed with and married Arabs in Palestine throughout centuries would refrain from throwing stones during the Palestinian *Intifada* because there was "some Jewish blood and roots in them."

Itzik, like the majority of Israelis, neither practiced nor believed in a religion. As secular, he was a keen fan of hard-rock, chain-smoked cigarettes and drove on Shabbat. However, like both religious and secular Jews, he emphasised a common Jewish identity (Ben-Rafal & Sharot 1991:252). He applied Jewishness as a symbolic resource

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[125] Middle class membership through small businesses is usually open to men reliant on extended family finances as seed money as collateral for bank loans, or reliant on loans from the Ministry of Commerce. Women have much less access to such family money or loans due to Israel's emphasis on child rearing and the high costs associated with childcare.

for his exclusion of the non-Russian newcomers he perceived as a threat to the traditional Mizrahi character of the town. He argued that Mizrahim, and even Arab descendants of Sephardic Jews, were closer to Judaism and hence naturally closer to the Jewish State than non-Jewish Russians.

Much more than among veteran Israelis, Russian-speaking Israelis do not define their ethno-national Jewish identity in religious terms.[126] Although the arrival of Russians has contributed to the ethno-national and the religious definition of Jew becoming somewhat relaxed, Itzik's narrative shows how Jewishness became an effective resource in negotiations of social positioning. A more western category, that of the Russians, while strengthening the westernisation project of Zionism, threatened the claims to Westerness and civilisation made by Mizrahim and thus their status in the ethnocracy. Both Rahamim and Itizk created a powerful counter-discourse to the Russians in town by paradoxically playing the religious card in the guise of upholding national unity and thus including themselves in the nation.

Defending a moral community

In George Mosse's book, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, he shows how sexual and moral values have come to be allied with nationalism. Nationalism has put every person in their place: man, woman native, foreigner, etc. This fixed hierarchy makes it easier to denounce those who stand apart from the norms of a group or from the nationalistic goals of dominant society. In his study of the sexual guidelines of respectability among the bourgeoisie of Europe, he argues that the specific situation or sexual act of a person was not judged, but rather his or her 'general behaviour'. Behaviour frowned upon was the result of an immoral education and an irreligious background (Mosse 1985:16). The exclusion of a category of people often entails the attribution of unique erotic qualities of the women of that category (Edelman in Siegel 1998:138). In my female informants' narrative Russian women were commonly portrayed as foreigners who had emigrated in order to disrupt the commonly used and accepted norms of conduct.

Judith, a woman of Iraqi Jewish origin in her mid-50s expressed her assessment of Russian influence through the lens of sexuality and immorality. Revital had warmly

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[126] In 1993, 64 % of the Russian-speaking immigrants who were Jewish according to *halacha* identified themselves as secular, compared to 21% among the Jewish population of Israel as a whole (Shafir & Peled 2002:318).

introduced me to her friend who was employed in a small textile shop across from the Kol-Bo-Tal store. I met Judith alone in the store which displayed colourful fabric and clothes. When I asked about her view on Russian aliyah, she laughed, repeating my question aloud and told me that she knew of several local men who had divorced their wives after the arrival of Russian women. "They were crazy about blond hair," she said flippantly and confirmed the stereotype of Russian women as husband 'stealers'. "One man left his wife for an awfully ugly woman who was thin as a skeleton with crossed eyes." Judith drew her checks together to demonstrate how thin she was and then laughed heartily. She continued with a story that illustrated her view of Russian morals. Once, a Moroccan man stole an expensive leather bag from a customer and gave it to his Russian girlfriend as a present. Two weeks later, the Russian woman entered the store carrying the bag. Revital told this woman that the bag had been stolen by a married man with four children; the woman was embarrassed and returned it. Judith modified her harsh judgement somewhat by saying that there were nice Russians in town as well. Her son-in-law was Russian but even he referred to the Russian women as prostitutes.

Judith's stereotypical view of the 'promiscuous' Russian female other illustrated how she degraded the moral character of secular Russian women. The Moroccan man in the story, who was acting immorally by committing adultery and stealing, was merely portrayed as a victim of the Russian woman who was stereotyped through the prism of the 'femme fatale'. Judith used this example to generalise about the immorality and sexuality of all Russian women. However, the Russian men were largely excluded from accusations of sexual immorality, thus showing an example of the esteemed value and role of women in reproducing the nation. In her narrative, the discourse of Israeliness was interwoven with both religion and gender.

Figures of women frequently embody nations the world over (Benei 2008). In Israel, the presence of numerous non-Jews amidst the former FSU immigrants contributed to a growing tension between Jewishness and Israeliness (Shafir & Peled 2002:308). Women's bodies and reproductive potential are places where 'demographic contests' between the Israeli Jewish and non-Jewish other, particularly Palestinians, is played out (Kaneeh 2002:23). Jewish women's bodies are deeply etched out as

procreators of the Jewish nation, as Jewishness is transmitted through the mother.[127] Israeli-Jewish women have the responsibility for securing the Jewish majority by 'birthing the nation'. Non-Jewish women are thus conceived as a potential 'threat' to the Jewish nation, particularly if they are unwilling to convert to Judaism.

According to women I knew, mothers were are also responsible for teaching their children Jewish values, traditions and morality and for ensuring that these teachings were passed down through generations. In the face of wide-ranging social, economic and demographic change many felt the need to defend the 'national' and 'moral' community. In particularly, older Mizrahi women filled family-centred roles and were dependent economically on their husbands' or children's income. Stories of Russian 'husband stealers' thus became a stereotype used as a warning for the possible break up of traditional family ties. The Russians, both secular Jews and non-Jews, were perceived as posing a threat to local stability, morals and traditionalism. Judith, along with other local women, fashioned themselves into ideal 'moral' and national subjects by highlighting the immorality of Russian-speaking female others.

Being civilised and rejecting Arabic

Orientalistion has been a method for the exclusion of both Mizrahim and non-Jewish Arabs (Shoat 1988). In the first chapter, I demonstrated how Zionist ideology, infused with Orientalist stereotypes associating Arabic language and culture with backwardness and primitive behavior, forced and encouraged Mizrahim to embrace the Western, European and civilised version of Israeliness. The concern about being civilised was a recurring theme among my informants. This value relied heavily on what were taken to be Western or European norms of propriety. My informants seemed to have internalised the Oriental stigma of Zionism which placed both Arab and Judeo-Arab culture on the lower rungs of the cultural hierarchy. Although I knew from interviews, and overhearing conversations, that some of my older informants used Arabic as a community language, they seemed to avoid it in public. Tal said the following when we discussed the topic.

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[127] According to Israeli law, a person is considered Jewish if either their mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother were Jewesses by religion or if the person has converted to Judaism in accordance with Orthodox Judaism (Shahak 2002:5).

I don't think it is necessary to learn Arabic. I was stationed in the army in the south with some Bedouin soldiers, and they all knew Hebrew. I learned some phrases in Arabic like "iftah al-bab" (open the door), but Hebrew is the official language of the state. I mean, why shall that change?

Rahamim saw no reason why Arabic should be spoken in Israel, even if his grandmother spoke it at home during his childhood. *"I can understand Arabic, but I don't see any reason why we should speak Arabic in Israel. We should talk Hebrew, English or even Norwegian for that sake."* Rinat on the other hand felt a sense of loss for not having been taught Arabic.

Whenever our parents spoke Arabic, we knew it was secretive. I think it is sad they chose not to teach us Arabic. But on the other hand, they also had to learn Hebrew. It was difficult for them, and perhaps they would like to give their children an easier time.

These comments reflect the stigma attached to Arabic as a cultural marker of Jews from Arab lands that became the language of the enemy in the Israeli State. They also demonstrated the success of the Euro-civilisational discourse on culture and identity, which had managed to shape the self-image of Mizrahim as inferior to a Western self.

Haim Elias, the museum manager, was one of my informants who was concerned with presenting himself as Western and civilised. Both he and his wife were employed at the local high school. On the weekend, Haim invited me for lunch at their house. He introduced me to his wife, two daughters and son, before he gave me a tour of the house. Walking through their living room he commented on their Western style of furnishings. From the conversation with family members, it was clear that all their children were contemplating leaving Kiryat Shemona. The youngest daughter was applying for a scholarship to study abroad and Haim proudly told me that the oldest child was going to the United States to work, selling products from the Dead Sea region.

In contrast to the aspiration towards the West presented in their domestic space, public space represented an arena for competing morals. For Haim, rude and misbehaving Israelis of all backgrounds contributed to the moral lassitude of the town. Walking along the streets from the Kiryat Shemona museum to their house he pointed

towards garbage that was lying in piles next to the street. He was clearly irritated and started to remove plastic bottles with a wooden stick. "Look how the youth are vandalising the city with alcohol and garbage. They don't respect it or care for the environment here." He shook his head and said nothing for a while, then he suddenly remarked.

> To tell you the truth, I don't really like Israelis either. I mean, their rudeness, their way of behaviour, the noise and all the balagan (mess). No, I prefer the European culture. I am sure that you (I was classified as European) are more quiet and organised.

During another visit to their house, Haim accused the Russians of contributing to the problems of the town.

> The Russians brought with them a lot of problems. They don't have any culture. They drink heavily, and look at the *zonot* (prostitutes)! We did not have these problems before they arrived. Many don't want to be a part of Israel, they just stick to themselves, their own shops and friends. And the Ethiopians…only a minority have successfully integrated in society. We came for the love of Judaism. The Russian immigrants came for the money! They come here and eat pork and most of them are not even Jewish!

This outpouring of concern may reflect deeper frustrations which derive from rapidly socio-demographic change, economic hardship and perceived threats to the Mizrahi position in the ethnocracy. Haim could not afford to leave the town but dreamt of better lives for his children. Self-fashioning as Western and civilised was thus a strategy for potential social mobility. Haim countered the chaotic and polluting forces by asserting his civilised status, distancing himself from 'all other noisy and rude Israelis'. Simultaneously, he embraced local notions of propriety and moral righteousness where threats to Jewish Israeliness were factors such as being non-Jewish or of doubtful Jewishness, eating pork, drinking alcohol and sexual immorality. He accused the Russians, and especially the younger generation of having a weaker sense of local and national belonging than the veteran families and sabras (a term used to describe native born Israelis), thus adding a veteran-newcomer rift to the existing political, religious and ethnic tensions. By defining the features of differentiated others as undesirable, Haim implicitly defined the desirable features of those who belong.

Redeploying the Oriental stigma

The exclusion and subordination of Arabs in Israel rests, at the most fundamental level, on the ideology or basic orientation of Israeli Jews. Discrimination towards Muslims, Christians, Bedouin and Druze has been the inevitable consequence of institutions and practices that serve the Eurocentric ideological imperatives of Zionism, such as the ingathering of the exiles and Jewish settlement of the land (Ben-Rafael & Sharot 1991:237). The Zionist settlement project has dispossessed and excluded Palestinians whenever possible from control over the various resources of the country and the state. The Jewish Nation Fund (JNF), that holds ownership of most of the land in Israel, enables continuous discrimination against non-Jewish citizens. It prohibits Arab settlements and its stated goal is to 'redeem' the land from its Arab owner and 'return' it to the Jews. The notion of 'redeeming' was, and continues to be, a central component of colonial consciousness. In the name of 'redeeming', policies of closure, confiscation of land and settlement, and cultural suppression of whatever was described as Oriental have continued uninterruptedly (Stasiulius & Yuval-Davis 1995:293).

In Kiryat Shemona, the ultra-nationalist party Yisrael Beitenu, which openly advocates the expulsion of Palestinians, received 23% of the votes at the national election in 2009. The leader, and current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Avigdor Lieberman's campaign used the sentiment of fear of the "disloyal" internal Arab other. Their slogan 'no loyalty, no citizenship', called for Israeli Arabs to sign a loyalty oath as a condition of citizenship. The growing success of the right-wing parties in Israel corresponds to trends in Europe where these parties are also gaining support. Anti-Islam rhetoric is no longer considered extreme or far right but part of the established political landscape.

While much scholarship has been devoted to Jewish-Arab relations, there has relatively little attention given to relations between Mizrahim and Arabs. At the time of my fieldwork, only a few Arab families were living in town. There was a small Arab minority, mostly Christian Lebanese from the South Lebanon Army (*Tzava Drom Levanon, Tzadal*) or Druze men who had married Russian women. A large percentage of the male members of the Druze community have served in the IDF and many of these soldiers have been sent to serve in the occupied territories. In Kiryat Shemona, both Sadalnikim and Druzim were employed by the security service. Their military employment and cooperation has contributed to the deepening of the existing mutual

distrust between the Palestinians and the Druze/Sadalnikim but has simultaneously increased the trust of Jewish-Israelis (Firro 1999:193). Other Palestinian Israelies from the surrounding towns and villages were employed in local industry, construction projects and factories. Although Mizrahim receive benefits in direct competition and association with Arabs, they suffer from the same underclass position in a welfare state that is transforming into a neo-liberal one (Ben-Elizer 2008:6).

Relationships developed between Jews and Arabs in Kiryat Shemona quite frequently on impersonal levels, at work and in public facilities. Daily encounters invariably occurred in the shopping malls where both Arabs and residents from the surrounding Kibbutzim came to spend their time for lack of comparable services in their own communities. Rahamim always went to get cheaper services at an Arab gas station and his sons went to Arab villages to eat the 'real' *hummos* or *shawirmah.* However, many of these encounters took place within the framework of Arab-Jewish power inequalities and perceptions of Israeli Arabs as others. With few exceptions, the majority of my Mizrahi informants seemed reluctant to develop *close* relationship with Arabs.

Walking home from a synagogue service, we passed a construction site with Arab workers. Revital pointed towards the workers, half whispering: "You see, they are Arabs. No one else would work like this on Shabbat!" Her daughter Keren divulged that although she often saw Arabs, she could never have Arab friends because their "mentality was so primitive", an expression that often seemed to be used to legitimise prejudice.

Some of my informants, who had suffered under the colonial Euro-civilisational idea of cultural primitivism through social exclusion and discrimination, referred to this stigma in their stereotypical description of Arab others. The following ethnographic vignette from my time with Esther Zakay shows how she repeatedly drew on the orientalist framework to differentiate herself from Arab others. One December afternoon, I was listening to Esther's well-worn list of complaints over a cup of coffee. The neighbours were dropping by constantly, interrupting her afternoon sleep and her children, too, were demanding. She grumbled about the students who lived in the apartment above and played loud music and she worried over medical bills. Her blood pressure was high and she was anxious about another rocket attack. She had to clean and cook and her husband did not "even know how to cut his own fingernails"! I asked whether she had been to the market, pointing towards the green plastic bags filled with

fruit and vegetables. She smiled contently when she told about the good deal she had made. "I bought all these apples from a Druze salesman. The Druzim are good people, although they are *primitive*." According to Esther, although Druze men who married Russian women were banned from their families in the Golan, at least the Russian women taught them to be more civilised and cultured. She saw the Russian women as bearers of civilisation and culture as opposed to violent and primitive Arabs.

Although I never saw Esther together with an Arab friend or acquaintance, she developed situational friendships with Arabs. Esther had Lebanese colleagues when she was employed at the Gibor textile factory, and emphasised how the *Shiim* (Shia Muslims) were more difficult to work with than the Christian Lebanese. A few years ago, Esther and Rahamim had enlarged their house with money received from their oldest son and they had rented out a room to a young Arab couple that they described as very nice and calm. "Not all Arabs are bad, the problem is that many hate Israel." Esther considered Arab men to be good workers and capable of doing *avodah aravit,* but they were not to be trusted in an intimate relationship. [128]

When Esther was employed in a nearby kibbutz, a female Arab co-worker complained about her husband's abusive behaviour, but would not dare go to the police. She cried that she was too afraid to leave her husband and so continued suffering. Esther explained the moral of the story: "Arabs don't know how to love their wives properly but luckily it is changing. Slowly the Arabs learn from us Israelis." Esther compared her friend's abusive husband to their Jewish neighbour, aged seventy-two, who had killed his wife a couple of months earlier. On Sunday morning, 12th August 2008, he had attended *Tisha B'Av* morning prayers at his synagogue and returned home to bludgeon his wife to death with a rock. According to Esther he had been beating and assauling his wife for years. Having put up with her husband's brutality, she was planning on leaving him, a decision that resulted in the murder. Looking down to the floor Esther mumbled, partly commenting on her own situation. "You see, men cannot live on their own. They are lazy and don't know how to clean. And the Arabs…they can have four wives. You can't live in the modern world with four wives! That is primitive!"

In the case of the Arab wife beater Esther stereotyped all Arabs as inherently more violent. In the case of the Jewish, far worse abuser, she did not use an ethnic or

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[128] Avodah Aravit (Arab work) has long been an Israeli idiom connoting work that was so demeaning that only an Arab would do it or the work had been so poorly done that only an Arab could have done it.

national category, merely 'men' in general. Esther had been an involuntary target of negative attitudes or behaviours, suffering under the Oriental stigma attached to being an Eastern Jew, experienced through discrimination and a sense of inferiority in relation to the Ashkenazim. In orientalising Arabs, Esther applied the stereotype of primitiveness that Ashkenazim had used to exclude her and applied the same in her description of the Druze and Shia Muslims.

Racism and ritualised xenophobia towards Zionism's external other

In November 2008, I agreed to do an interview with the local newspaper *Meidat Shemona* after the journalist Orna Rein contacted me several times. I thought it through and asked for advice, knowing that a portrait sharing my academic interests would create curiosity. The freely distributed newspaper was very popular and contributed in creating a sense of local pride and identification with a place usually portrayed by national media in relation to economic hardship and war.[129] The article was titled "A question of identity" and highlighted that I had moved "from Damascus to Kiryat Shemona."

Figure 22. "A Question of Identity"- Interview with the anthropology student. (Rein in Meidat Shmona 17/10/08).

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[129] A standard issue typically covered local and regional topics such as elections, cultural and sporting events, in addition to advertisements and notices of marriages and deaths.

Upon learning that I had lived and worked in Damascus, both friends and strangers approached me to ask about life on the *other side*. "Were you not afraid?" Esther asked me. She seemed to imply that I, as a Western, unmarried woman should be wary of living in an Arab country. The ambivalent responses registered disbelief at my choice to be surrounded only by Arab others. Alongside expressions of rejection and prejudice towards Arab others existed an attraction, with memories and fascination about the countries they had left. For many, the ties to Arab homelands were dual sources of both stigma and pride.

The mass immigration of FSU immigrants has led Israeli Jews to realise that Israel is becoming more and more a multiconfessional and multicultural state. This has not necessarily modified their perception that to be Israeli and to be Arab are two irreconcilable identities. Most of my informants expressed concern about the 'demographic threat' the Palestinians in Israel posed to the Jewish State. "We would not be surprised if the town became Muslim in the future" was a standard phrase I often heard.

> We don't want this to happen to Israel, we want the country to remain ours, to remain Jewish. If we move, the following day they'll (the Arabs) want the rest of the country as well, from the North to Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem.

These comments show how Arabs were portrayed as posing a cultural threat to the Jewish-Israeli nation (Allen 2010:10). Stereotypes, where my informant represented themselves or other Jewish groups, were more benign that stereotypes aimed at representing non-Jewish others, particularly Muslim Palestinians, who were the frequent subjects of everyday racism.

One day I joined the Zakay family at the large indoor swimming pool of Kibbutz Hagoshrim. Esther's cousin Avri was employed as a lifeguard in the hall and had arranged discounted admission for everyone. During my stay in Kiryat Shemona, I often went to Hagoshrim to exercise and had noted that Avri always had friends visiting or was chatting to visitors who congregated around his lifeguard stand. Avri had spent most of his adult life on a kibbutz, although he was originally from Iran. The Saturday we were visiting, a group of approximately 40 Arab tourists entered the hall in bathing suits, the women were covered in T-shirts and shorts. Avri started to utter racists

remarks, but not so loud that they could hear them. "Look at those Arabs, they make so much *noise*. Many of them can't even swim." He studied them with suspicion as they entered the pool. Rahamim nodded in agreement and said: "It's really a shame that you can't deny them entrance." Their expressions of resentment surprised me. Uncomfortable with the explicit racist comments, I told them that I had met several friendly Arabs in the souk at the weekly Thursday market. On expressing his surprise at my reaction Avri shook his head and lifted his arms up in a futile gesture and tried to convince me further. "Yes, you are referring to the Druze. They are *alright,* but these Arabs are Muslims, the worst sort. They are savage and *zevel* (garbage). Really, look how they behave, like *haiot* (animals)." The admission of Muslim Arabs into the swimming pool of a Zionist kibbutz settlement created a high level of ambivalence for Avri. Contrary to the ordered and disciplined Zionist body, the Arab Muslim body represented fluid and polluting substances, posing a threat to the integrity of the Zionist "self" (Yosef 2004:43). The mixing of bodily fluid in the pool seemed potentially polluting. Racism thus became central to the demarcation of Zionist boundaries and the policing of social and ethno-religious hierarchies.

Later that week Rahamim seemed eager to clarify his view. His serious facial expression and tone of voice conveyed that this was a sensitive topic to discuss.

> I don't consider myself an extremist like Lieberman (the leader of Yisrael Bietenu). Arabs are parents too, but they (the Arabs) are becoming more dominant. I will tell you an anecdote to highlight my point. I was following a sick friend to the hospital. There was a framed tablet with the names of the financial donors in the reception. Next to me was an Arab sitting and you know how people chat while they're waiting. So I turned to him and said, You see there? This hospital was built with money from Jews abroad, and they still help you. It was important for me to tell him, that he enjoys the services of the Jewish country.

Both Rahamim's story and Judith's comment were demonstrations of their sense of privilege and assumed superiority over the Arabs who were considered second-degree citizens and free-loaders of the Israeli welfare state. In order to be accepted, they were expected to be 'quiet' and loyal. The Arabs who were 'noisy' and visible, such as the Muslim Arabs in the public swimming hall, were viewed as a cultural and ethno-religious threat to the nation.

What Yiftachel calls the Israeli ethnocracy (2002:42) not only grossly discriminates against its non-Jewish citizens but seems to construct a self-fulfilling prophecy. Categories and individuals marked as anti-national are marginalised and oppressed and if they resist or behave to 'loudly' they are condemned as 'disloyal' and thus further excluded. In this view, those Arabs living quietly and who are not criticising the nation-state out loud are considered more loyal and easier to socialise with that those who were potential protesters.

In contrast to muted racism in the public sphere, the football field provided an arena for openly channelling racist attitudes and anti-Arab resentment out loud. Football was one of the most popular activities amongst the men of the working-class community. Rahamim stated that Kiryat Shemona would have been a deadly boring city without football. He was a devoted supporter of the town's great pride, the football team Hapoel Ironi Kiryat Shemona. Bale has written that the football stadium can be seen as a place where "strong positive identification with…locality, region and nation is perhaps best generated" (1988:513). The stadium was an arena for displaying oneself not only as a fierce supporter of the local team but also as a nationalist subject and patriotic citizen.

In November 2008, I attended a football match between Hapoel Ironi KS and the Arab Bnei Sachnin (Sons of Sakhnin) at the local Ironi stadium.[130] The vast majority of the Hapoel supporters were from Kiryat Shemona .[131] I recognised several familiar faces and found a seat next to Rahamim Zakay and his two sons. The atmosphere was festive with the core group of supporters banging on drums and waving Israeli flags or the club emblem. The majority of the Bnei Sakhnin fans were Arabs but some of its supporters were also Jewish Israeli fans from the neighbouring kibbutzim. The Sachnin supporters on the opposing bleachers did not fly any Palestinian flags, but waved a gigantic flag of Che Guvara. The icon associated with revolution and resistance to colonialism is tremendoulsy popular amongst Palestinians fighting against oppression. At kick-off, fans on both sides were singing and waving their flags intensely, jumping up and down in unison. When the Arab team performed better, the Ironi supporters chanted racist and derogatory sentences such as "we hate the Arabs". After Sakhnin scored, Rahamim was singing happily: "This is the Jewish state, we hate all Arabs!" The collective ritualised

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[130] Sakhnin is the most successful Israeli Arab club and they won the State Cup in 2004.
[131] Kibbutznikim from Kfar Blum and Lehabot Habashan are stars on the Ironi soccer team.

chanting of blatant racist remarks seemed to be an accepted norm in the context of a soccer match.

Demonstrating anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments in speech and practice seemed to be a nationalistic act for the residents of Kiryat Shemona that I knew. In social practice, it was clear that cooperation and friendship existed but in discourse sharp boundaries were drawn around the Jewish collective, thus confirming the dominant national dichotomy where Jews opposed Arabs.

Russocentric prejudice against Mizrahim

Over the last two decades many FSU immigrants have embraced a strong Zionist and anti-Arab position in political voting and public rhetoric. There are several reasons that account for why the Russian immigrant communities are particularly prone to anti-Arab racism. Israel was for many FSU immigrants their first time abroad and they were shocked to see that Jews came in every possible colour and appearance. Negative and xenophobic sentiments towards the Islamic religion were well rooted in Russia (e.g., towards Chechens, Tatars or Kazakhs) before emigration to Israel. An Orientalist discourse, with regard to the native of the Caucasus and Central Asia, also circulates in post-Soviet Russia, in both literature and press. The immigrants could thus deploy a 'Soviet-made' orientalist framework to intepret a new reality (Shumsky 2004). However, Shumsky underemphasises the position USSR immigrants received in the Israeli ethnocracy viv-a-vis the Israeli centre. The anti-Arab and anti-Muslim stance frequently displayed by Russian-Israeli politicians, intellectuals and media link them to the Israeli hegemonic identity as western, Ashkenazi and Eurocentric. At the same time, this orientalism can also be a challenge to the Israeli establishment, since it emphasises the national over the religious. Also, countering the suspicion that they are not Zionist or Jewish enough, the immigrants might identify with the more secular Zionist elements of society in order to gain their acceptance (Shafir & Peled 2002:319, Gitelman 1995).

This issue of ethnic prejudice is ideologically loaded, making it difficult to talk about. It is also difficult to elicit frank responses in surveys (Remennick 2007:67). Even so, according to one survey by Feldman (2003), 30 % of Russian immigrant respondents consistently admitted to harbouring prejudice against Moroccan or other Mizrahi Jews, 40 % expressed negative opinions about Ethiopians and over 80 % strongly disliked the Arabs. Pejorative attitudes towards Mizrahim were also revealed in

anecdotes and personal narratives about adjusting to life in Kiryat Shemona. Although I spent considerably less time with Russians in Kiryat Shemona, two Russians I got to know stereotyped themselves as superior Westerners and projected Mizahim as inferior and Arabised.

Alec had left Irkutsk in Russia when he was six years old with his mother, and they received cheap housing in Kiryat Shemona as a part of an aliyah package. Like many others from the younger generation he complained about the lack of relevant work in town, and he planned to leave as soon as he could. He had served the army, but said that he had little in common with other Israelis. Sharing the army service did not mean that he shared their values or interests. Although he grew up in Kiryat Shemona, he had few non-Russian friends and he preferred to be surrounded by Russians.

I spent one evening with Alec and his friends on a Shabbat in October 2008. We met at the town's public square and the atmosphere was lively. Alec had prepared for Friday night by buying a bottle of Vodka and handed out plastic cups to his friends, a considerable cheaper alternative than buying expensive drinks in the kibbutz pub. Psychedelic Trance by the Israeli group *Magic Mushrooms* blasted from the car stereo. A crowd of Mizrahi-looking youth was gathered outside. I asked him whether these youth was going to the same kibbutz that we were. Alec burst out: "*Ma pitom?* What do you mean?" He pointed directly towards a tall thin young man with black hair. "They are *arsim* (the term comes from the colloquial Arabic word for pimp and is used to stereotype low-class Mizrahi men with bad manners). I hate arsim. I don't need them." He was clearly offended by my question intimating that I would expect him to be friends with such people.

Later that night, one of his friends drove us home. We parked outside a gas station to get some fresh air. I noticed that the phrase *Am Israel Hai* (The people of Israel lives) was sprayed in blue letters on a stone. The words are from an Eastern European Hasidic song that has become a patriotic nationalist Israeli song. I had seen the words on several public walls in town. I asked Alec why the graffiti appeared on this particular surface. Lifting his shoulder in a shrug he said loudly: "They are *barbarim* (barbaric) here in Israel. They like to vandalise and mess things up, they don't have any culture. Israelis don't think before they do anything!" He kicked the stone with his foot and pointed towards his head, "they don't think".

Figure 23. "The Nation of Israel Lives."

Alec held a Russocentric view about Mizrahim in general and the Mizrahi character of Kiryat Shemona. He dismissed the patriotic spray as vandalism and seemed to imply that he would refrain from Mizrahi and Israeli "barbaric behaviour" because he viewed his Russian-European cultural identity and education as superior. Alex affirmed his self-identification as Western, while rejecting the Arabised Mizrahim who he blamed for not being cultured and European enough.

One day in February 2009, I visited Mila (38), a Russian Israeli that lived in a mixed neighbourhood. Her flat was sparsely furnished, and decorated with crystal vases and books in Russian. Speaking Hebrew with a heavy Russian accent, Mila shared her life story. She made aliyah with her husband, son and parents when she was 20 years old. Her eldest brother had emigrated a couple of years earlier and they decided to join him. The prospect of living in a Jewish nation-state, and providing her son with a better future, were some of the other motivating factors for Mila's move to Israel. They emigrated from Saratov, a major city in Southern Russia with almost one million residents and settled directly in Kiryat Shemona. Mila divorced her husband after he adopted an orthodox lifestyle. After the divorce, she worked as a physiotherapist in the army for seven years, before she took a course in reflexology at the Tel-Hai College.

She set up a small business from her flat in Bialik Street where she had been self-employed ever since. It had been hard to live under Communism as a Jew but she also had difficulties adjusting to life in Israel. First, she felt alienated and explained this in relation to labour competition, jealousy and cultural differences.

> I did not have high expectations about life in Israel. The Moroccans were afraid that we would take the jobs from them. Some told me that I would get a hard time, just like they had when they made aliyah in the 1950s. Several people in Kiryat Shemona became jealous. We had higher education, but were willing to take on simple jobs. You would have doctors cleaning the floors, without complaining.

Mila drew a parallel between her previous socio-economic situation and that of the Arabs, saying that "she used to get paid like an Arab". Her parents held good professional positions in Russia, but once they moved to Israel, they lost their status and became depressed. "They were treated poorly, like *effes* (zero)!" Since they had difficulties learning Hebrew, Mila had to act as an interpreter. Mila had also suffered under the suspicion of being a non-Jew. "In Russia we were constantly reminded that we were not Russian, and here in Israel we are accused of not being Jewish enough!"

As a rule she did not treat Arab customers in her practice. "I know it is a racist thing to say but the Mizrahim were mentally close to Arabs," she grinned apologetically. She held similar attitudes to Alec about Mizrahim, when she somewhat embarrassingly admitted that she hoped that her only son would marry an Ashkenazi girl that had a 'similar mentality' and closer affinity to Russian culture. Her problem with admitting that she held racist attitudes is indicative of the majority embarrassment tied to racism. However, like many others, she largely concealed her racism in arguments of Oriental 'mentality and culture', and viewed herself within the Eurocentric Ashkenazi component of Israeli society.

Friendship with a loyal Druze

While Mila openly discriminated against Arabs, she had a Druze friend, and like Esther she seemed to treat the Druze as another category. In contrast to Arab Muslims, Druze in the region demonstrated their loyalty through army service and married within their own religion, and so were perceived as less of an internal threat to the Jewish character

of the state. "The Druzim live quietly in the mountains not causing any trouble," Mila said. She invited me to visit Nadi, her much younger former colleague, in the Druze village of Mas`ada, located deep in the northeastern corner of the Golan Heights, bordering Syria and Lebanon.[132] In relative terms for Israeli distances, and Kiryat Shmona are quite far apart. During the 30 minute drive towards the village, Mila's fingertips were tapping nervously on the steering wheel of the old Volvo. She revealed that she would not have planned this trip if I not had come along. She viewed her colleague as a trustworthy person, but did not know much about the community he came from.

Mount Hermon loomed to the north and a few Israeli military vehicles passed us, a common sight in this border region. Following the directions of signs marked in Hebrew, Arabic and English, we passed through smaller villages. When we reached Masada, the Israeli flags had been replaced with the multi-coloured Druze flag. A few kites in the same colours were attached to the white and beige stone houses. Any remaining nervousness seemed to disappear quickly when we entered Nadi's house. His mother, dressed in a long black robe and thin white shawl, greeted us in the hallway. She had prepared a meal for us which we enjoyed on the floor in his room. We spent the next few hours eating and going through photos. Mila was smiling while Nadi showed us pictures of his friends and family.

After lunch, Nadi drove us to an apple farm nearby where his cousins were employed harvesting the apple orchards. I greeted the factory employees in Arabic and they were excited to hear that I had been to Damascus.[133] One of his cousins had studied in Damascus and returned to the Golan afterwards. To demonstrate his hospitality, he gave us a box of apples to bring back to town. "They're honest people," Nadi expressed.

Nadi had lived and worked in Kiryat Shemona but had found work in a kibbutz closer to Masada. He much preferred the kibbutz and the apple orchards to the development town. His tone changed entirely when he shared his opinion about the town where Mila currently lived.

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[132] Mas`ada's Druze population, its relative proximity to the Israeli-Syrian 1967 Armistice Line, and its remoteness from the Jewish settlements of the Galilee are some reasons why Israel did not destroy the village or expel its population after 1967.

[133] Some Druze are allowed to study at the University of Damascus and then return to the Druze villages, but for the majority of the population Damascus is distant and inaccessible.

The mentality there really stinks. People are into drugs and gangs. Of course not all of them, like Mila. But there are some really bad people there. This is my opinion, but they will never show their true face to you. I met a researcher from Scotland that came here to do a project on human rights. So I said to him, human rights, what is that? There are no humans here. Maybe you will discover this in Kiryat Shemona. But you have to discover it for yourself. That there are no humans there, just shit. The kibbutznikm are better. They have thoughts, just like the Russians. They came from a big country with culture. They have thoughts. Culture, just like you people from Europe.

I was struck by Nadi's strong aversion towards Kiryat Shemona and its residents. However, Mila seemed to share his views. Having both experienced exclusionary practices and attitudes, they had developed an antipathy towards the town they both described as uncultured. Mila said she would like to move away but that she could not afford to live anywhere else.

One week after our visit to Masada, I visited Mila at her flat. She became upset as she told me how her solider-son, who had recently finished his army service, had become furious about her visit to the Druze village. "Do I look like someone who will hang out with Arabs?" her son had shouted in a tone of fury. Mila appeared uncomfortable about relating this confrontation to me. She seemed to imply that spending time with an Arab could be considered as an anti-national practice, even if this other was considered loyal to the Israeli State by the collective. Mila seemed uncertain and divided between her friendship with Nadi and her son's accusations of her alleged friendship towards Arabs. Competing ideas about the limits for relations with non-members of the Jewish nation were evident, even within a family.

Teaching multiculturalism

Despite ethnic tensions, it is important to note that there were several efforts of cooperation in town. When the Mizrahim lost their numerical strengths and their electoral power decreased, some local politicians created new cross-ethnic alliances. Identifying the tensions between Russians and Mizrahim a government initiative had been established to work with improving their relations. I met the manager of the counselling centre *Hafoch Al Hafoch,* for youth in distress. Irit Aloni (36) had set up the

programme which was aimed at getting locals to re-evaluate their attitudes and bridge the gaps that they felt separated them from the others. She explained that the relationships between the old Mizrahi families in town and the Russian newcomers were problematic due to cultural and religious differences, as well as shared prejudices. The centre had employed a diverse group of social workers and developed programmes to enhance the understanding between different immigrant groups. Speaking energetically and with a clear voice, she seemed unaffected by the tape recorder.

> We want to teach the youth that we are all together and explain to them about different cultures. One day we prepare Moroccan soup and the other day we bring Russian food. We learn about their holidays and they learn about ours and together we can come to a common understanding that the other culture is not too bad.

The youth centre focused on how the two communities could enrich each other and overcome their differences. However once again, culture was encouraged only in folkloric' forms, and the centre did not include 'the elephant in the room', to use a popular contemporary cliché. The state-sponsored youth centre did not talk about the more severe tensions and prejudices that existed between Jews and Arabs. Implementing a true multicultural project in the context of the Galilee, where a high percentage of the population is Arab, would entail including the experiences of Arab youth as well. The programme promoted inter-cultural understanding that was exclusively Israeli-Jewish and not inclusively multicultural. Because of this the possibility of creating a real multicultural space seemed difficult in a society based on strong ethno-national logic, such as appears in the case of ethnocratic Israel.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the colonial Euro-civilisational discourse influenced boundary making in everyday life in Kiryat Shemona. Racism was manifest in the many forms of everyday discrimination and prejudice, further exacerbated by the ethnocratic character of a colonial settler society. Both Mizrahim and Palestinian Arabs, in different measure, share the experience of socio-economic marginalisation and colonial racism. I have suggested that Mizrahi relations with Arabs continue to be driven by the Jewish reaction to an Oriental stigma rooted in Zionist ideology. Mizrahi residents redeployed

the Oriental stigma and colonial racism, thus reproducing the dominant tropes of identity as presented in Eurocentric Zionist ideology. Personal narratives and anecdotes shared by Mizrahi informants in everyday contexts revealed ambiguous attitudes towards the Russian communities. The fall of the USSR and the continued mass immigration, the rise of neo-liberalism and the competition for scarce jobs have adversely affected ethnic equality and assimilation and are some of the factors that influenced residents' attitudes and experiences. These circumstances have resulted in the need to assert and re-shape identification, with consequences such as mutual antagonism. Creating a negative image of Russians served Mizrahim who felt threatened by various aspects of the Russian immigration. Some residents found justification for their prejudice against various threatening others in presenting themselves as guardians of faith and tradition. The success of Zionism's Euro-civilisational discourse was reflected in the major concern with being regarded as civilised. Being able to demonstrate civilised behaviour and Western cultural capital was a crucial factor in self-estimation and social demarcation and a boundary-defining device produced by both Mizrahim and Russian-speaking Israelis to distinguish themselves from each other. Mila and Alec racialised Mizrahim, portraying them as a cultural threat to European Israeli society where they placed themselves. Where Mizrahi prejudices towards internal Russian others showed competing claims for Israeliness, attitudes towards the Arab minority groups or Zionism external others, were characterised by suspicion and racism.

Chapter 6

Longings for an Arab past and an American Future

The more than half a century experience of Mizrahim in 'returning to a homeland' not only provides an opportunity to explore how the immigrants were taught to become Israeli, but also how a 'home-coming' can produce new formations of transnational interests and identification. Mizrahim see the Israeli State as their homeland but many retain attachment of symbols of affiliation to a Judeo-Arabic culture and express nostalgia for a previous homelands outside Israel. This chapter examines my informants' memories and current attachments to places outside Israel how these shaped their sense of belonging or not-belonging. Invoking an idealised Arab past or American/European future became a way to deal with disillusionment over life in a stigmatised border town. These symbolic attachments to other places and times challenge the image of rootedness emphasised in Israeli official nation-state rhetoric. It also challenges theories of nationalism that perceive the object of loyalty as singular and centred on the nation-state, such as that of Benedict Anderson's famous work on the imagining of a sovereign national community as a "deep horizontal comradeship". However, these connections, although transcending the nation, rarely broke with nationalist ideology but rather worked alongside, often meeting the demands of the nationalising discourse. Memory and a global orientation may facilitate greater belonging and re-enforce national boundaries to the current 'homeland' in a settlement context, even if these connections are not always recognized or valued by the dominant society. Hence, the aim of the chapter is to show how transnational orientation is not necessarily accompanied by the weakening of a national identity but rather by challenges to its dominant nature.

Multiple homes and memories

Central to Zionism and its political legitimisation is the idea of a shared Jewish heritage and destiny. This ideology implies that there is an unchanging, stable core of ethnic belongingness, which assures the individual an imputed continuity with the past (Eriksen 2002:92). Advocating an ethno-symbolist approach to nationalism, Anthony

Smith (2003) argues that although national communities can have profound roots in earlier ethnic communities, it is misleading to claim that there is an *unbroken* continuity from pre-modern communities or 'cultures' to the national ones. In his thought-provoking book, *The Invention of the Jewish People,* (2010) Shlomo Sand shows how modern Israeliness is based on flawed interpretations of the past. However, the notions of shared history and continuity are powerful and pervasive. The concept of one people reunited in their ancient homeland has actively prevented any affectionate memory of life before the State of Israel, at least within the public sphere (Shoat 1997: 48). Immigrants of all background were expected to dissociate themselves from their past. In the last two decades there has been a deconstructive approach in critical scholarship about the unifying function of collective memory in scholarly works. Researchers have recognised that Israel's various groups, both those belonging to the Jewish majority and those to the Arab minority, have a variety of collective notions of homogeneity, memory and national belonging. Despite the efforts undertaken by the agencies of the nation-state to assimilate them politically and culturally, they remain distinctive (Eriksen 1997:121).

This chapter will focus on transnational practices 'unbound' from the nation-state to account for wider fields of action. Transnationalism is a process by which social actors sustain or forge social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders (Basch et al. 1994:8). Physical movement, nostalgia for other homelands and transnational connections challenge the connection between people and their place. Gupta and Ferguson state that "remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people…. 'Homeland' in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples" (1992:11). "Homelands bring together memory and longing, the ideational, the affective and the physical, the spatial and the temporal, the local and the global, the positively evaluated and the negatively (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 8)."

Several scholars have shown how aliyah has resulted in the emergence of several new 'homelands' and diasporas. Anteby-Yemenis's analysis of the Ethiopian Jewish aliyah shows how they, by moving to Israel, became part of the "Ethiopian diaspora" and more broadly the "Black diaspora"[134] (Anteby-Yemeni in Levy & Weingrod 2005). Similarly, the Russian-speaking Jews in Israel became part of the

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[134] More than 50,000 Jews emigrated from Ethiopia to Israel during the 1980s and 90s. (Levy:15)

"greater Russian diaspora". Sapritsky shows how Jewish immigrants from Odessa were "able to test their status abroad while securing their status at home" (Sapritsky 2011:252). A number of families from Odessa stayed in Israel for a period of time while maintaining strong material and communal links to home and other transnational destinations. Israel became a place of partial loyalty and belonging without fully accepting its status as their 'homeland'. Disillusioned with the reality of life in Israel, many were able to maintain a more flexible 'exit' option for return than previous immigrants. The centrality of Israel was also challenged by the attachments that local Jews felt towards their life in Odessa and other locations (ibid:258). This shows that the relationship between 'homeland' and diaspora, and these classifications themselves are not fixed categories but flexible and multidirectional (Levy 2001).

For many of the Mizrahi immigrants, the promised land of their parents and forefathers became a new exile, culturally speaking. The emigration to Israel marked an exile from an Arab-Muslim culture in which the Jews were deeply embedded and which helped shape their culture in a dialogical process that resulted in their specific Judeo-Arab identity (Shoat 2001: 2). Their return to a 'sacred homeland' did not end affection for and suppress communal nostalgia for one's former homelands. Mizrahim from the older generation, in particular, considered themselves as fully (or in exceptional cases as quasi-members of Israel), connected to their Arab countries of origin. Although Arabness was stigmatised by mainstream society, many residents in Kiryat Shemona maintained strong memories from their Arab symbolic homelands. Social and cultural processes that transcended the boundaries of the nation-state were part of social life. The numerous ethnic synagogues, the preservation of folk costumes, festivals and traditional weddings illustrated an allegiance to the 'old ways'.

Mizrahim entrapped at the geographic and socio-economic margins of Israeli society, have preserved and constructed transnational deterritorialised ethnoscapes. More well-off Mizrahim from Morocco can travel back to the places they previously lived as nostalgic tourists. However, the impossibility for most Mizrahim to go back to their parent's country of origin makes the act of imagining the past and living memory crucial. Cyberspace also mediates between regional communities that otherwise cannot meet due to physical and ideological borders. Iraqis and Moroccans who grew up in Israel without the option of travelling back to their country of origin can do so via Internet (Naficy 1999: 230).

Food consumption is also a notable site for transnational embodiments and central in producing a sentiment of nostalgia. The most popular restaurant in the centre of Kiryat Shemona, *Taamim,* advertises with authentic Moroccan cuisine such as *hamim (*Moroccan Sabbath stew), thus ironically contributing in the exoticisation of Mizrahi culinary traditions. Crafts, souvenirs, spices, videos and music from Morocco that were displayed in households are now also sold in shops.

The Russian community, a fifth of the town's population, had their own ethnic attachments.[135] Russian-speaking Israelis maintain a wide network of contacts with other Russians outside Israel and often prefer the services and products of Russians to those of other Israelis (Remennick 2007:9). There were three, small bookshops selling only Russian literature and 'Russian evenings' were held at the community centre with public singing of sentimental folk songs evoking nostalgic imaginings of the homeland. Although these phenomena of nostalgia and the desire to retain ethnic attachments and practices are found among migrants to other industrialised countries, they are noteworthy in the Israeli context since they deviate from the mono-cultural ideal of Zionism that continues to stress the relevance of a shared Hebrew culture in relation to national belonging and citizenship.

Mizrahim have contributed to the more general Israeli-Hebrew culture with food, entertainment, ethnic literature and music (Smooha 2008:10), a process that is similar to that which Gilroy describes for Black cultural styles in England during the 1960s and 1970s (1993).[136] Although some Mizrahi traditions have entered into the mainstream, much is still presented as exotic and minor folklore ancillary to national Hebrew culture. In the dominant model of the Israeli Jew, the Mizrahi is an individual who can retain an attachment to symbols of affiliation but he or she is still expected to assimilate.

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[135] Although the Russians came from a variety of subcultures, some from Asia and others from Europe, the great majority of the immigrants spoke Russian and tended to view themselves as belonging to this category. This is also how they are perceived and categorised by mainstream Israeli society. Since the late 1980s, more than a million Soviet immigrants moved to Israel from the collapsed USSR. The largest *aliyah* occurred between 1990-1996 when over 600,000 immigrants arrived.

[136] Music from all over the Arab world, ranging form Umm Kulthum to ra´i with many local versions, is extremely popular in Israel. Even the intellectual Ashkenazi elite appropriated classical Arabic music during the Oslo boom (1993-2000) as a kind of cultural embrace for the "Peace Process". Unfortunately music, like food and folklore, cannot said to be a bridge between the Jewish society and the Arab world. Arabic music has no political implication for state-polices. Even right-wing parties play Arab music at the very rallies where they preach anti-Arab rhetoric. Similarly, the Gush Emunim radio station energetically broadcast Arabic music (Pappe 1997:61).

Nostalgia for a 'lost' homeland was a recurring theme from my informants. A connection was not only made in practice and at the level of embodiment but also through story-telling. Residents eagerly shared memories about the where and why they had come. They constructed a range of personal and collective pasts and futures that sometimes were in conflict with official narratives and overlapped with the goals of the nation-state. The nostalgic yearnings and transnational longings my informants exhibited in their stories were utilised to express flexible and creative emotions with multiple meanings. Sometimes transnationalist practices and longings were deployed strategically as a response to disillusionment with Israeli life. Halevi-Wise states that representation of memory, even when mythologised, can salvage a "damaged" sense of identity and re-territorialise Mizrahi experience (2001:2). Many of the people I got to know in Kiryat Shemona expressed deep disillusionment with the Israeli State. In contrast to citizens with dual passports and the financial means to social mobility and cosmopolitan life-styles, they were structurally stuck in the periphery, with few real alternatives and routes to take in life. Thus, they had an ambivalent relationship with the Israeli State which was responsible for their sense of loss and estrangement. It did not live up to the Promised Land but rather offered repetitive disappointments. Nevertheless, it was the main provider of a home and deserved sacrifice and commitment, especially during times of heightened conflict.

Remembering Iraq

At midday in late September, when the sun was blisteringly hot, Avri (72) and Judith Moshe welcomed me warmly into their home. For a long time, Judith, my ulpan teacher, had wanted me to meet her husband because he "knew much about history". Avri had taken an interest in my project and wanted to share his knowledge and memories of life in Iraq.

Although they were not observant, their home was decorated with Jewish religious objects from Iraq. He proudly told that his mother had taught Judith how to prepare *kibbeh,* a dish made out of burghul, chopped meat and spices, even though she was Ashkenazi. It seemed important for Avri to emphasise that this 'Iraqi' food had not

only survived displacement, but was being passed on to other family members.[137] *"I love Iraq! If I could, I would go tomorrow! I am Iraqi. And my wife, although she is Ashkenazi, is Iraqi!"* he laughed. In contrast to Jews from Morocco and Turkey that can visit these countries freely, a visit to Iraq, considered an enemy of Israel, was impossible. Judith placed pastries and lemonade at the table, then went indoors. Avri seemed unaffected by the presence of the tape recorder. He started speaking slowly and clearly, sometimes pausing for a moment to smoke a cigar.

He remembered an easy and happy Iraqi childhood in Kifri, a Kurdish town in northern Iraq. He studied together with *goyim* at a Christian school and was exempted from the hours they were taught religion. On Friday evenings, Shabbat candles were lit and his family went to Synagogue. He studied Hebrew and read the *Torah* but he felt like an Iraqi boy. With great pride, Avri idealized the Jewish flourishing Jewish community that once existed in Iraq. Most Iraqi Jews were educated, literate and occupied high economic positions in Iraqi society. Jews formed a part of the Iraqi government and many of the wealthier families sent their children to study abroad.

Jews and Jewish customs and holidays influenced Iraqi cultural and commercial life. The Iraqi Jews spoke Arabic and thought of themselves as Iraqis before Jews. "If you did not succeed in life, something was wrong", Avri said convincingly, sipping lemonade.

> In our daily life, I hardly thought of who was Jewish and who was Arab. We got along fine, and some of my best childhood friends were Muslim or Christian Arabs. We had very good relationships with our neighbours in Iraq. It was only after the establishment of the Israeli State that all the trouble began. We set out from Kifri in a train bound for Baghdad. We slept in synagogues as if they were transit camps, while the Jews of Baghdad assisted us. Iraqi Customs went through our belongings at the airport. We stood naked in the sun for a long while without being able to go to the bathroom. Finally we took off for Israel.

Avri recalled a secure and peaceful past living harmoniously with the Muslim majority and Christian minority, a relationship came to an end with the establishment of Israel. In March 1950, Iraq passed the Draft Law, which stated any Jewish citizen who

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[137] In many relatively secular Israeli households internet resources are frequently used for cocking ideas, contributing to a variety of eclectic menus.

wanted to leave now could do so, but would then be stripped of Iraqi nationality. By July 1951, 90 % of the Jewish community, or around 120,000, had left Iraq on planes commissioned by Israel in what was named "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah" (Shabi 2010:91).

For Avri, the experience of aliyah had been characterised by dislocation, humiliation and downward social mobility. He retained childhood memories of harmonious co-existence with Christian and Muslim Arabs but in Israel non-Jewish Arabs had become the enemy within. He claimed that there had been a 'population exchange' between Arabs and Jews. Since the Arabs had so much land and Jews only Israel, he meant that the Palestinians in Israel should voluntarily move to the neighbouring Arab countries.[138]

Avri's present-day attitudes towards Palestinians and Arabs were characterised by suspicion and prejudice. The week after interviewing Avri about his memories about Iraq, emigration and settlement, I met him and his wife at the *Nehemia* mall. We occupied a table outdoors, chatting about his health and the upcoming elections. Avri expressed concern about the build-up of Hamas arms which was being reported in media coverage. "It's like they want war! And the Arabs are supporting them, and they are in the belly of Israel!" he said anxiously while pointing towards his stomach. "No, you can never really trust an Arab!" Judith joked.

Sentimental identification with Iran

Iranian Jewish ethnic festivals have been revived within a Zionist framework. In Israel, Iranian Jews link Jewish history in Iran with contemporary Iranian life in Israel through cultural performances. Religious and cultural customs from Iran form the *moreshet* (heritage) for Iranian Jews in Israel. Iraniness is invoked through activities, seminars, evening entertainment and TV programmes. The sharing of these activities reinforces the reality of an invented past (Leshem and Shuval 1998:392).

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[138] This view corresponds to statements by the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC) which has lobbied for compensation after claiming that they were expelled from Arab countries. It was founded in France in 1976 and argues that the issue of expulsion of Jews from Arab countries and the losts of property should be measured against any 'dept' that Israel might pay out to the 711,000 Palestinian refugees who fled or were forced to leave the coutnry during 1948 war (Shenhav 2006:229).

Revital and Benny Chackotay did not remember much of their early childhood in Tehran but stressed the importance of traditional Persian core values such as family, faith and education. One evening in January 2009, we watched a Channel 2 documentary together in their living room about Iran's Jewish minority which triggered strong reactions among the family members.

The Iranian-Dutch filmmaker Ramin Farahani, interviewed members of the 20,000 strong Iranian Jewish community in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz who have stayed in the country after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. There were scenes that demonstrated various prejudices against the Jewish communities, and other scenes that enacted friendship among Muslims and Jews. In Ishfahan, the director documented the love and passion that Iranian Jews have developed for their city. In Teheran, the old Jewish musician, Nejat Bakshishi, told about his experience with discrimination when his musical store was taken over my Muslim owners.

> We owned our store for sixty years, then they forced us to leave. They tricked us...they got the store for free. Just like that...God be my witness, they did no even pay a penny. Because the store belonged to my brother and he isn't in Iran. He lives in Israel and it's difficult for him to return. They won't allow him to go back and forth. So I came here. Since the instruments were rotting away at home. I rented this place here. Now, of all Jews in Iran, I am the only one who owns a music store. I am the best Tar repairer. I am the only one left (Farahani 2005).

Watching this, Benny was moved to tears. He shook his head, pushing his glasses back into place and said: "I am so happy we live in Israel." Revital was visibly upset with a scene where Jews expressed allegiance to Iran after a synagogue service. Although the film evoked sentimental identification on the religious-cultural level, they condemned the Israel-hostile regime of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Persian Jewish family's past in Tehran was nurtured and remembered but they believed Israel was the only real safe place for Jews. Symbolic identification with a country considered hostile to Israel, challenged the Zionist myth of one unified memory but did not translate into political loyalty to Iran. As for Avri, symbolic identification with another homeland intersected with experiences of nationness in Israel.

Defiant memory

In Kiryat Shemona there were several narratives about suffering and loss. At the same time, feelings of fear and suspicoin permitted nationalism and social unity. Most of my informants who expressed symbolic identification with previous homelands, did not express loyalty or nationalist sentiments for these places. Like their children, they had learned love and loyalty towards the Israeli nation-state through schooling and military service. However, as I have shown in earlier chapters, individuals challenged the unconditional ties of loyalty and identification that nationalism promotes.

Mazal Salma (62) was a part-time seamstress in the Chackotay's store. She utilised memory and pride for her country of birth, Turkey, to cope with feelings of bereavement and disillusionment over life in Israel. On Tuesday October the 7th 2008, during the morning hours, I visited the store. It was always quite busy but the staff took time to chat with customers who were usually more eager to share the latest gossip than to purchase goods. I met Mazal in the sewing room which was located behind the main room.

A few customers had entered the room to be measured and fitted, bringing pattern books and materials with them. As the customers left, Mazal sat down in front of a sewing machine surrounded by threads and fabrics and continued to work as we talked. She had a black shawl over her sholders and beads twisted around her wrinkled hands. Although it was the first time we had met, I learned a great deal about her when she shared her life history. Mazal grew up in a moderately well-off Jewish home in Istanbul. Her ancestors had fled the inquisition in Spain and resettled in Istanbul. "They received us with open hands," Mazal said admiringly, stretching out her hands to demonstrate her point. In Turkey, Jews and Muslims took care of each other and the rich would give to the poor and needy. Jews formed a part of the Turkish government. Mazal's mother used to run a small laundry service for mostly Turkish Muslim women. Her customers loved her mother and used to give her money and food in payment for her services. They loved her so much that they told her: "Don't go to Israel. We want you to stay here with us, in Turkey." Mazal's mother told her customers that she wanted to leave for Israel where relatives already had resettled. She went to senior officials and sheiks to ask for permission to leave. She would have only been allowed to leave when she reached the age of eighty but she was only thirty-six at the time, so she emigratied in 1956 against the will of the authorities.

Mazal believed that her family was the first Turkish family to arrive in Kiryat Shemona. Her Moroccan husband had passed away thirty years earlier and she was depended upon her children. Her daughter worked in Tel-Aviv, another son worked in a kibbutz factory and one was unemployed. She expressed a wish to return to Turkey permanently because "Israel was not what it used to be". She provided a subversive critique of Israel by juxtaposing it to its enemy country, Iran and saying that she understood why Jews remained in Iran. Mazal exoticised Turkey as the most beautiful country in the Middle East, protecting their Jews and assisting Israel when "they ran to Turkey for help". She recalled that her son, while studying, had promised to bring his mother to visit Istanbul, a trip she could not afford. She was clearly frustrated that her son had not kept his promise.

> I'm still waiting for him to take me. But I'm soon 63 years old! The other day I told him: If you don't take me now, I'm sure I'll die before I have the opportunity to go. Now they want to leave the town to find a job in the centre. I told him; if you leave I'm sure I will die! For 2,000 years God forgot about us. He forgot the Jews, because we made many mistakes.

Mazal experienced a sense of being 'stuck' both from cultural dispossession and socio-economic and geographic entrapment (Lavie 2011). She experienced economic hardship after early widowhood, as her husband had been the main financial provider in the family. She had little education and had been a housewife until the death of her husband. When her only son did not have the finances to provide for her needs, she had found part-time work as a tailor in the Kol-Bo-Tal store. She expressed resentment towards the neo-liberal Israeli State that seemed unable to provide for its citizens. Mazal's experience of great economic distress might have strengthened her nostalgia and wish for a better life in Turkey. The evocation of an idealised future provided comfort in the present. By telling her mother's memories of an open and inclusive Turkey, she shared values that no longer existed for her in Israel. She narrated her mother's world as once lost but still accessible through her son's promise of a return. Her capacity for what I term 'defiant memory', revealed the existence of a space where she could project her aspirations outside the legitimate boundaries of the national collective and learn to cope with the reality of her marginalised situation. Her imagined

future in Turkey transcended national borders and rejected the formal goal of the nation-state where rootedness in Eretz Israel is paramount.

Transnational ties as status symbols

Many of my informants, who sometimes fashioned themselves as overtly patriotic, genuinely engaged with and dreamt of alternative lives outside Israel. Those who could demonstrate financial and linguistic access to the Western world were admired in the local community. Sometimes I was met with a mix of admiration and feelings bordering on envy and suspicion for my own mobility and Westerness as a researcher. There were vast socio-economic differences within families, often between those who had left the town and those who had remained. A small but visible minority in Kiryat Shemona was prosperous and the signs of success were conspicuous: expensive cellphones, fancy cars and newly constructed villas. Speaking about family relatives involved in transnational practices who spoke English could translate into 'status attainment', enhancing social status and personal prestige.

The first time I encountered Shosha Ezra (60) was in the Chackotay's store on a warm August afternoon. Her hair was bleached light blond, revealing dark roots, a general trend amongst Mizrahi women in Israel trying to be more European or Ashkenazi looking. Cultural and racial stereotypes are associated with dark skin, and several Mizrahim make an effort to hide their 'Eastern' traits. By embracing physical embodiments of European traits, they hope to attain cultural and social leverage in order to enjoy the same recognition and privileges as the Ashkenazim.

Upon meeting Shosha, she immediately introduced her son, taking his passport photo out of her leather wallet. For a moment I thought that she was playing the role of a *shadchan* or matchmaker, looking for a wife for her son, like many mothers in Kiryat Shemona. She was excited to overtly boast about the achievements of her offspring. Proudly she told me that her son worked in the field of electronics in Raanana, that he had travelled in the United States and his ambition was to open an electronics store in Miami. She gesticulated with her jewellery-covered hands and said enthusiastically: "thousands of *Kiryat Shemonim* (a term used to describe people born and raised in Kiryat Shemona) live in Miami." In this statement there seemed to be an element of trying to impress me with her knowledge of the outside world. I particularly noticed that at no point in our conversation did she mention the centre of Israel where the economic

power is concentrated. The implicit statement seemed to be "who cares about Tel-Aviv when my son can live in Miami". She distanced herself from the Israeli national collective and included herself in the Jewish/Israeli collective of the United States, a population she generalised and stereotyped as *Kiryat Shemonim* just like her. However, in the United States, like in Israel, there is a range of attitudes within the Jewish segment of society. Some citizens are deeply involved both ideologically and materially, in the nationalist project of Israel, whereas others are fiercely critical of it.[139]

The month after our initial meeting, I visited Shosa in the small fabric store where she worked, located opposite the Chakotay's store. She was thrilled, very talkative and was dressed in pink garments from head to toe, with matching fingernails. She excitedly showed me old family photos her sister had brought from Ashkelon. She pointed to the photo of different family members in a black and white photo, then paused and closed her eyes while turning away from the photo. She took a deep breath and started talking, in long emotional sentences, into the tape recorder.

> Sometimes I watch documentaries with stories from the countries we came from. Iraq was a wealthy country before Saddam Hussein's regime. I remember that my mother made uniforms for the British soldiers. Some of my mother's sisters married soldiers that brought them back to England. I don't know whether they were Jewish or not. If my mother was still alive I could have asked her. I am sure I have distant relatives in England. The similarity between Jews from Iraq, Iran and Morocco is that they guarded their Judaism. Because they were living in Arab countries, they had to guard their religion. They did not marry a *goy*, no way. *Gan HaEden* (paradise) was close to Euphrates and Tigris, where the most tasteful fruits were. I tell my children that according to the Bible, our border is from Euphrates and Tigris until Lebanon in the North and the other border to Jordan.

Shosha expressed nostalgia for a specific place and time period, enthusiastically embracing the mythologised version of Babylon. She romanticised the beauty of the place, the taste of the fruit and how the Jews protected their religion. Her rhetoric of the ancient glory of Babylon coincided with the biblical concept of Greater Israel stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. Her national sentiments interconnected both with nostalgia for an idealised past and her transnational imaginings experienced

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[139] In August 2011 leading Jewish organisations in the United States were protesting what they saw as totalitarian tendencies in Israel.

through the life of a family member. She stressed the presence of Kiryat Shemonim in America. Her son had successfully entered the middle class by demonstrating financial and linguistic access to the outside world which enabled Shosha to increase her local status in the community with amazing stories to tell. Her references to relatives in the United States and England, the tasty fruit in Babylon and exaggeration about her connections to a cosmopolitan world, all indicated a need to downplay the structural impact of the Israeli cultural and socio-economic centres and her own class-position in Kiryat Shemona.

Morocco as a safe place

In contrast with other Middle Eastern countries where Jews have lived, such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya and Yemen, the Moroccan government made it possible starting in the 1970s and 1980s for Israeli Moroccan Jews to return and travel freely. Due to this policy of openness, a substantial number of Israeli Moroccan Jews have travelled back to Morocco, where today an estimated 5000 Jews live (Shabi 2010:57). Some have returned as pilgrims to the tombs of famed saints or *zaddikim*. The pilgrimages gather Jews from Israel, France, Canada and the local Jewish community, symbolically reproducing and strengthening the ties of a "Moroccan diaspora" (Weingrod & Levy 5:2007). Sizeable numbers have also gone on so-called 'heritage trips' where they visit places they previously lived. Others have travelled alone or with their family to visit relatives or places they had heard about from their parents and elders.

Itzik, the owner of the music shop, never told me about his experiences with immigrant absorption. However, one day as I was about to leave his shop, Itzik picked up a DVD and handed it to me. "Watch this, it is a present for you!" he uttered excitedly. The film, *Tipat Mazal* (a bit of luck) by the Israeli director Zeév Revach depicts a Moroccan immigrant and his talented daughter's struggle to integrate into Israeli society. The film shows the difficulties the new immigrants had in adjusting to their new lives, especially to the language and the Ashkenazi way of life. It became a hit throughout Israel after it was released in 1992 and is still popular today in Kiryat Shemona. It is a part of a growing literature of film and books that represent the past in glowing colours, nourishing nostalgia for the old ways through Arabic language and music. Although the film is humorous, it clearly shows the Ashkenazi establishment's condescending attitudes towards Mizrahim. Perhaps Itzik gave me the film because it

dramatised the hardship he had gone through, without his needing to articulate such painful memories.

One warm mid-November day, I visited Itzik's shop. It smelled of old newspapers and roasted coffee. A small TV with American sitcoms was switched on in the corner. He offered me the only chair behind the counter while he leaned towards a pile of CDs. There had been no customers that day and he blamed it on the global economic recession. The poor sales did not seem to affect his mood. He had just returned from a trip to Istanbul with his wife and was eager to tell me about the city's greatness and impressive size in comparison with Kiryat Shemona. I asked Itzik how life in Kiryat Shemona has been through the years.

> The mentality here in Kiryat Shemona is different and people are more stressed. We experience a lot of *balagan* (mess) in the army and the *miloim* (army reserves). In 1976 I had to leave my wife and children to serve the IDF for a whole month. I was stationed in Sharm El-Sheik and there was only one name there, Muhammad.

After Itzik jokingly labeled all Muslim others Muhammad, he explained in a low but clearly upset tone about the "rainfall" of Katyusha rockets on the town. His granddaughter had wet her bed until she was six years old, out of fear. He pointed towards the street outside his shop to show me where a Katyusha rocket had landed. He described the terrible sound of the shells and how the rocket lit up the sky at night. He claimed that the Mizrahim in Kiryat Shemona had suffered much more than the Ashkenazi kibbutznikim, revealing the underlying socio-economic tensions between the two segments of society.

"Life here is not calm, and the stress really gets to people," he said nervously touching a pile of CDs with his fingertips. Itzik nurtured ties to Morocco and had visited Casablanca in 1991. He found life there to be calm and relaxing. He felt secure when he was amongst his relatives, even though people outside his family knew that he was from Israel.

> It was like coming home. At twelve o clock in the afternoon everyone would sit in their homes and enjoy a lunch followed by a one-hour siesta. At four they would return to work. At seven or seven thirty it was dinnertime. They worried less; they don't have the same stress as us. In Morocco I slept heavily, better than here.

Itzik's case highlights the dominant national morality of being at home in the homeland. For him, the notion of home entailed both a sense of loss and of the new. Itzik had experienced another home within his lifetime and compared the Israeli landscapes in relation to that other world. He articulated stressful and traumatic memories from his army service and wartime. The ordinaryness of armed conflict perhaps strengthened his need to nurture bonds to a homeland where he could construct a 'safe zone'. Despite the hardships, he did not intend to emigrate and emphasised his strong attachment to the town, manifested through family networks and his livelihood.

Dual belonging, one national loyalty

I occasionally spent time with the Dahan family, a Moroccan Jewish family living in the moshav of Migdal next to the Sea of Galilee, a forty minute drive from Kiryat Shemona. Having known the family from the beginning of my stay in Israel, I visited them whenever I went to Tiberias. The moshav is in close proximity to the Northern border but the experience of the middle-class Dahan family differed from the families in the development town of Kiryat Shemona. They did not compete with Israeli Arabs for jobs and had come to experience financial security over time through independent small business ownership. Josh Dahan's (56) family came from Morocco to Palestine several generations ago and belonged to the elite cluster of old established Sephardic families. He took great pride in being the son of native-born Palestinian (subsequently Israeli) Jews. Josh knew Arabic and he claimed that "his father still thought in Arabic". His wife, Neti Dahan (50) emigrated with her family during the late 1950s.[140] When they got married, she was included in his elite network of old and prestigious families, thereby bypassing the usual economic hardship. The family had an above-average income, as Josh had led several construction projects in the moshav. Neti was dedicated to her job, working long hours in a health shop in Tiberias. Their three children worked in the travel industry, organising rented acccommodation of popular *zimmers* (based on the German word for room) for well-off Israelis, the majority of whom were middle and upper class Israelis from the Tel-Aviv area.

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[140] In 1948, approximately 265,000 Jews lived in Morocco. Today the Jewish community counts about 12,000 to 17,000. Most of them live in Casablanca, but also in Fez and other cities. France received 80,000 Moroccan Jews, Canada 20,000, Spain 5,000 and the US 4,000 (Zohar 2005:297).

The family strongly identified with a Moroccan Jewish Diaspora culture. Israel was for them the Jewish homeland but Morocco was also home, but a home without borders (Schroeter in Wettstein 2002:150). Neti was born in Casablanca and had visited Morocco twice as a grown-up. During the previous visit, she went on a pilgrimage to the tombs of Jewish saints. She perceived Morocco generally as a safe place to visit and less hostile towards the Israeli State than neighbouring Lebanon and Syria. She was proud of the good historical and contemporary diplomatic relations between Israel and Morocco, and talked warmly about the role the kings of Morocco had played in promoting good relations with Jews.[141] Their appreciation of the Royal Family was reflected in a framed picture of King Muhammad V which hung in their entrance hall; and they had Morocco's red flag with its green stars displayed in the living room.

The Dahan family's nostalgia for and symbolic identification with Morocco existed alongside the expression of strong right-wing political attitudes. During the Israeli war on Gaza, I watched news coverage at Channel 2, together with the family and Josh uttered racist comments such as: "We should throw the Palestinians to the Sea" and "look how they hide behind women and children, using them as human shields."

These comments initially surprised and shocked me, as I knew that the Dahan family in other contexts would talk kindly about their Palestinian workers. Actual interethnic relations deviated from the descriptions in his statement. In January 2008, I followed Josh to a building site and he told me that he felt more akin to the Arab workers than the Ashkenazi window installer. He did not like the way the kibbutznikim treated the Arab workers. "They command them around like they are dogs or something! They are extremely snobbish!" Josh was frequently invited to the private homes of his employees in the Arab villages surrounding the moshav. Later the same month, on the Jewish holiday of *Tu Bishvat* (New Year of the Trees) January 22nd, I joined him in an Arab village where he wanted to buy an olive tree. His Arab employee, Saleem, joined us as a guide. We were tucked together in the back seat of the car. The Star of David with the words *am Yisrael hai* (the people of Israel lives) was plastered on the rearview mirror, leaving little doubt about the nationality of the driver. However, inside the car it was Arab music which was turned on full volume. The atmosphere was relaxed and humorous, with Josh bragging about how I had been to the other side of the

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[141] King Muhammad V refused to implement racist laws during the Vichy period, before leading the struggle for independence.

border. "*Ya'allah,* she has been to Demessek!" he shouted to Saleem who seemed equally amused and surprised by this fact. On another occasion Keren, disclosed that Josh's brother was married to an Arab woman from a neighbouring village. However, the marriage worked very well "because they had a very similar *tarbot* (culture)".

The fact that Josh had hired several Palestinian construction workers, and his brother had married a Palestinian woman, was at odds with his racist description of Palestinians during wartime. A Jewish Israeli who might be tolerant towards an individual Arab was hostile towards an Arab presence as a 'phenomenon'. The distinction between Arabs as individuals and Arabs as a collective became very much blurred and collapsed in times of war (Rabinowitz 2001:17). It was clear that Josh's attitudes during war differed in the workplace and during peaceful holidays. Although the family felt a strong symbolic connection to Morocco and a cultural affiliation with Israeli Arabs, these sentiments did not transfer into identifying with the suffering Palestinians in the Occupied Territories during wartime. Josh accorded the ethnocracy an ontological stature by being hostile towards Arabs, but challenged it with his own affiliation to Arab culture.

Forgetting the past

During the year that I lived and studied in Haifa, I noticed that my Mizrahi friends and informants, who belonged to the middle-class and lived in urban areas, rarely identified themselves as Mizrahi or talked about family memories from an Arab past. There were major differences between those who remembered life in Arab countries and those who were born in Israel. First-generation Israelis seemed more concerned with the past than their children, whereas my younger informants seemed eager to distance themselves from Arabness. The relative little attention given to the topic in everyday practice and conversation was in stark contrast to Kiryat Shemona, away from Israel's social and cultural centres, where 'the ethnic issue' informed much of everyday life across generations.

I met Moshe Attia from Haifa at the Mount Carmel, a café close to the University of Haifa, on June 4th 2008. Wearing a blue shirt with a white collar, he looked very self-confident. While I was preparing my tape-recorder, he was greeting the staff and other customers; he was clearly a familiar face. Moshe immigrated to Israel with his family as a three-year-old child in 1956; the eldest son of Moroccan

immigrants. He had five brothers and two sisters but his parents could not afford to educate him. He remembered growing up in a strictly religious family but as a grown-up he considered himself more *masoriti* (traditional), than *dati* (religious). Moshe had never visited Morocco, neither had his father. He talked about the difficulties his parents had undergone in Israel and his relationship to their country of origin.

> When we lived in Morocco, my father's family dreamt of the Holy Land and Jerusalem. As soon as the government gave them the opportunity, they left. They arrived straight to Haifa, whereas my uncle was sent to Beit Shaan in the North. The distance might only be one hour from Haifa, but the mentality is entirely different, really like another world. My father came from Morocco without any education. Today he is 92 years old, and has no interest in Morocco. He would never go back because once they left it was forever. My grandmother was more than sixty years old when she came to Israel. For her it was too difficult to start studying Hebrew, so we spoke Arabic at home. My mother speaks Hebrew fluently, but she can't read the newspapers. People might want to visit Morocco for nostalgic reasons, but they don't care about the country as such. The previous Israeli minister of defence, Shoal Mofaz, is originally from Iran, but now he is promoting war against Iran. There is no real political support for these countries among Sephardic Jews.[142] It is just a part of the past. It was a place they lived.

Moshe's identity as an Israeli seemed structured around estrangement from Arab history, tradition and language. Having made a career as a football manager he had successfully moved across the ethnic boundary, acquiring class membership associated with Ashkenazim. He transgressed the ethnic boundary further and had lived in several different countries in Europe, like Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria in order to do business and secure a better financial future for his family. He sent all his children abroad to study but expected them to return. He claimed that those who leave Israel permanently because of the security threats are like "hysterical mothers not wanting to send their children to the army"; they were weak. Moshe's social mobility had made the Mizrahi ethno-class less relevant, and he attributed Mizrahim living in the peripheries

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[142] The term *Sephardim* referred initially to Ladino-speaking Spanish Jews exiled from Spain in 1491 as well as to the specific religious customs of Ladino-speaking and some Arabic- and Persian-speaking Jews, whose religious customs differed from Yiddish-speaking Jews and often amongst themselves. Their descendants settled mostly on the northern shores of the Mediterranean and in what is now Northern Morocco. Today the term is used to refer to Jews of the Mediterranean Basin as a whole and also to those from the Middle East (Zohar 2005:13).

with an 'entirely different mentality'. Like many of my informants, he used the term Sephardic instead of Mizrahi to avoid the low-status connotations of the term. The Zionist Eurocentric discourse on culture and identity seemed to have succeeded in this case and created the Mizrahi category as inferior to an Israeli Western category of belonging. Moshe presented himself as a cosmopolitan Zionist, willing to make sacrifices for the country but he realised its limitations and built his own economic success and consequential liberating space beyond the nation.

Rinat and Nir Zaid, both graduates from University of Haifa, also distanced themselves from their parents' Moroccan past. I visited their downtown flat a few days after their son's bar mitzvah. He was ashamed that his mother had been employed by a cigarette manufacturer working long days for a low wage. "I don't know how she could be content with such a life!" He blamed his parents for their lack of mobility, saying that they could have done more to succeed as new immigrants. The evocation of his parents' class position revealed his bitterness. Perhaps he knew that it was not his mother's lack of aspirations that had hindered her mobility but the unequal distribution of power within Israeli society in favor of its Ashkenazi population. Although their parents occupied a low social position in Israeli society, both Nir and Rinat had managed to move into the socio-economic hierarchy through education. They were both fluent in English and had several foreign students as friends. While not denying that their parents came from Arab countries, they distanced themselves from the underclass position they had occupied. To them, a place like Kiryat Shemona connoted the very marginality and exclusion they had successfully escaped through social mobility. Comfortably placed in the middle class, I never heard them use the category Mizrahi but rather stressed the category of being Israeli.

Leaving the Promised Land

"I love my country but the fighting, it never ends," the fictional character Zohan says in the comedy "You Don't mess with the Zohan", by the American Jewish comedian Adam Sandler. He plays the Israeli combat soldier Zohan, who wants to leave his conflict-ridden homeland and create a new life for himself in New York City as a hairstylist. This story resonated in Israeli reality. Israelis, especially the younger generations, have become trans-national, sharing in uneven measure their allegiances between the Jewish Homeland and "Otherlands" (Weingrod and Levy 2006:16). The

Israeli daily newspaper *Maariv* reported in 2007 that approximately a quarter of the Israeli population were considering emigration. This trend is clearest among the young people, where more than half were thinking of leaving the country (Maariv 20 April 2007).

Twenty-five years ago, during the previous financial recession in Israel, those who considered or thought about *yeridah,* emigrating from Israel, were generally condemned. Emigrants were considered weak Zionists who left the homeland for shallow material gains. Just as aliyah was a more permanent decision, emigrating from Israel was considered an all-consuming total break with the homeland and a threat against national cohesion. However, the stigma attached to *yordim,* as people who abandoned the Zionist nation-building project, is changing as Israel has gradually become a neo-liberal State with diminishing government intervention, especially in the economy. One reason for this is the large number involved, an estimated 700,000 Israelis live abroad. This changing attitude towards yeridah are also linked to Israelis' growing disillusionment with their own country. Their reasons for considering emigration include disappointment with the government, unemployment and concern over the security situation (Gold 2002:31).

My driving instructor, Oded, was disillusioned with Israel because as a country it did not live up to his expectations. Approaching downtown Haifa on a practice run in an Arab neighbourhood he shared a sentiment that was widely held:

> Ten years ago my son said he was considering leaving Israel. I remember I would protest loudly and say: How can you leave our country? If he had told me the same today, I would not have rejected his wish. I have fought four wars and gone through difficult days (*iamim kashim)* in this country, but times have changed. The entire political system is corrupt. Just look at Olmert and his poor judgment and leadership. Today there are only liars *(shakranim)* and thieves *(ganavim)* left. The Arabs can sleep safely, because we (the Jews) are creating enough trouble for ourselves.

Other informants from the settlement generation in Kiryat Shemona stressed the importance and obligation of living in Israel, despite the difficult and hard life. The hardships they had gone through had made them strong citizens. They argued that the new generation differed from their founding generation and uttered complaints such as "if Israelis used to do everything for their country, today they do everything for

themselves" or "life used to be better before, we did not have much, but we were together". Esther contrasted the greed and self-seeking individualism of the present with the togetherness of the past, constructing a positive narrative around traditional values such as modesty and moderation. "I wish I could have my childhood back. Like Kiryat Shemona used to be."

These complaints and nostaliga were telling examples of the tension between collective obligation and individual aspiration. The younger generation was described as wealthier, more self-oriented and mobile than the older generation. A sense of grievance was definitely less salient among my younger informants and the highly educated middle class. Alternative and negative opinions about Zionism were not considered subversive but seen as a part of the growing divide of Israeli culture. Thirty-year-old Yiftach described developments the following way: "Our parents founded the country. Now the air has gone out of the Zionist bubble, and we are trying to find new paths."

In the face of contemporary processes of neo-liberal development and global mobility, several dreamt of breaks from Israel and alternative routes in life. The demands from the nation-state were, for some, experienced as too demanding. The younger generation seemed less motivated by pioneering and collective values than their parents' generation. Some expressed a wish to leave Kiryat Shemona and move to the centre, migrate or have short stays abroad to 'clear their heads' and escape the instability of the region.

Globalisation has made labour migration easier and decreased the distance between Israel and the United States. It has intensified the Americanisation process and the longings for a space that imaginatively encompasses the 'rest of the world'. Alternative futures were imagined through transnational mass-media images, scripts and sensations and gave residents the opportunity to creatively cope with feelings of entrapment (Appadurai 1996:6).

Noa, a student in Kiryat Shemona, quoted the Israeli supermodel Bar-Rafaeli in her Facebook profile writing: "Why live in Israel when you can live in New York?" Particularly, it was the dream of America that was verbalised and kept alive in Kiryat Shemona. American popular culture still holds tremendous soft power in Israel, perhaps since the Israeli State maintains strong political and economic links with their original colonial 'sponsor'. Israel could never enjoy the relative freedom and prosperity it does without the massive political, economic and military support of USA. Because of this,

the American Dream in the Israeli context is not completely free from nationalising forces.

New de-territorialised technologies have not necessarily affected the construction of belonging to particular states and territories. Several of the people I got to know were active on the Internet, chatting to friends and relatives abroad. Simultaneously, they were strong supporters of right-wing ethno-nationalism and some attributed their steadfastness to a sacred mission of protecting a geo-political frontier.

The realisation of yeridah has a clear class-dimension. Those who can afford to leave are primarily secular and educated Ashkenazim who identifiy with Western and global culture. With few exceptions, it was members of the financial elite in Kiryat Shemona who could act upon the dream. Children of financially well-off families were sent abroad to work in the US or Europe selling Dead Sea products. The son of Mila, a Russian informant in Kiryat Shemona, found a job with an Israeli firm in the United States after having served in an elite unit of the army. The economically privileged were going on backpacking trips to South-America and Asia, a common Israeli post-army rite of passage.

Just as many *olim* (immigrants) will spend a few years in Israel and return to their native country, several *yordim* (emigrants) spend a few years abroad and return to Israel. Dual citizenship has become more common in Israel, and several informants stressed the benefits of enjoying citizenship rights in more than a single state. The growing phenomenon of dual and multiple state citizenship threatens the governability of states as these blur the linear boundaries of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011). Faced with growing unemployment, an American or European passport open new employment opportunities overseas. Some Israelies I got to know perceived a second passport as a personal risk-aversion strategy in the face of future threats of war.

Twenty-eight year old Omer expressed the anxiety he felt about wanting to live abroad versus being 'at home' close to family and friends. He was a pacifist and deeply sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. His frustration with the direction Israeli politics and society had taken, led him to move to Barcelona for a period to find some sense of normalcy. His father's family connections to Austria had secured Omer (who identified as Mizrahi) an Austrian passport and access to the European labour market. Omer, like many other Israelies I got to know, had viewed this stay abroad as temporary. A second passport did not necessarily bring about ambivalence over belonging but rather opened up alternative routes and created impermanence. As such, he did not go to Europe to

assimilate but to relax. His heart was still in Israel. For many of my more steadfast informants in Kiryat Shemona, talking about potential plans for the future did not necessarily involve acting upon them. There was a fear that the American Dream would not live up to its expectations. As such, the imagination might have greater power than the realisation.

Conclusion

Peripheral nationhood both work within and override national borders. In Kiryat Shemona, the negotiation of national belonging at the margins of the state was made up of transnational movements and longings. Many Mizrahi residents felt strongly connected to the country where they were born or from where their ancestors came. Their 'return to the homeland' as narrated by Zionist ideology, did not bring about an absolute end to ties of belonging to one's former country. They engaged with and created new ties with homelands which were symbolic rather than political, as they did not express political loyalty to a nation-state other than Israel. The transnational belongings and longings often emerged from conditions within Israel itself. Many were disillusioned and expressed a sense of entrapment living at the geographical and socio-economical margins of Israeli society. Living in an Israeli border town characterised by relative economic deprivation and anxiety against future threats of attack encouraged many to invest financially and emotionally in transnational connections as potential 'emergency-exits'. To emphasise global connections increased status and prestige and was also an effective strategy used to reduced the sense of entrapment. The younger generation seemed to be less worried about the sovereignty and identity of the nation than their parents and found it easier not only to dream, but also to act upon these alternative belongings. The involvement in transnational practices shows how the Zionist rigid definition of wholesome homes are problematic. These tension-laden tendencies reflected not only dispositions and deep divisions which arose from Israel's troubled establishment, development and existence, but also ruptures in what it meant to be Israeli in a globalising world. With the ongoing economic, political and social-ideological development, it appears that Israeli immigration will continue to increase. It remains to be seens whether future olim and yordim are able to maintain as strong an attachment to Israel as had their predecessors.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the character, dynamics and negotiations of nationhood amongst Mizrahim in the Israeli border town of Kiryat Shemona. The development towns in frontier regions were glorified by the Ashkenazi elite and functioned as a settler-colonial practice for controlling territory and peripheral populations. Jews from Arab and Muslim countries were placed on the geographic and socio-economic margins of Israeli society, positioned between the Ashkenazi Euro-dominated leadership and indigenous Palestinians, solidifying ethno-class stratification. Whereas Mizrahi Jews were located on the borders of modern Jewish identity and transformed into internal others, Palestinian Arabs were transformed into definitive others. Mizrahim were included as members of Zionist nation-building, but excluded from the centres of power, without receiving full recognition for their 'pioneering' activities.

The people who I got to know in Kiryat Shemona were not just passive victims of state-imposed ideology and categories but carved out their own personal and collective maneuvering space within the ethnocratic-colonial dynamic of social exclusion and inclusion. I have named the practice of social actors negotiating and co-authoring national belonging from the margins as peripheral nationhood. Peripheral nationhood entails not only movement and resistance from the periphery but also a reconfiguration and negotiation of hegemonic nationness.

I have moved beyond the conventional axis of binary opposition (Mizrahi/Ashkenazi, lower class/upper class) to a focus based on the multiple shifting and relational self and other-identifications. Socio-economic mobility had implications for identification with the ethnicised category Mizrahi. The vast majority of my informants in Kiryat Shemona avoided using the collective label that has been employed to justify discrimination and exclusion of Mizrahim in Israel. For them, the Mizrahi category suggested ethnic subjugation and low socio-economic status. Intermarriage, inter-generational social mobility and ethnic networks challenge the homogeneity of the constructed categories of Mizrahi. However, Mizrahi remains a crucial category of analysis because it has been shaped by an ethnocratic ideology, preserved at the social and economic peripheries and continues to inform belonging and not-belonging. Despite social mobility and intermarriage, Israelis who do not match up to the ethno-national ideal of a Western and modern Jew, e.g., Mizrahi, an ultra-

orthodox Jew, or an Arab and or Ethiopian Jew, are perceived as less Israeli and subject to negative stereotyping.

Examining the daily experiences of my informants, they challenged the boundaries of Ashkenazi secular Israeliness by stressing the importance of religion, community, memory and morality. These identifications challenge the definition of *Mizrahiyut* (Easterness) as an axis of identification that must be erased and forgotten in order to enter the Israeli collective. Other ethnic categories such as Russian-speaking Israelis (both Jews and non-Jews) and Palestinian Israelies were also involved in the process of challenging the Ashkenazi dominated centre.

The interplay of class, ethnicity and place were factors which created the Mizrahi-ethno class and shaped social experience. When compared to the centre, economic gaps were not narrowing but growing. Statistics from CBS show that the socio-economic class largely corresponds to a Mirahi background in peripheral border towns which are spatially marginalised from the Ashkenazi structure of power. However, there were also varying degrees of ethno-classism in Kiryat Shemona. The Zakay family complained about financial hardship and governmental neglect and were economically stuck. The Chackotay family had been upwardly mobile and could rely on their wealthier children. For both them and middle class Mizrahim in urban centres, the ethno-class was less relevant. Irit aloni, who had studied in the centre, emphasised intermarriage and social mobility as the solution to ethnic exclusion and hiearchy. Nevertheless, the shared diffused sense of origin and solidarity, coupled with persisting marginality and hardship, create frustration and resentment that reinforce an attachment to the town. The Mizrahim I met, from varying socio-economic backgrounds and places of residency, had experienced Ashkenazi prejudice and sense of superiority. Ethnicity based discrimination per se is not only true to 'poor' Mizrahim. Middle-class Mizrahim are still not fully accepted into the dominant Ashkenazi society because of their non-European backgrounds.

Mizrahim marked boundaries against differentiated others through ethnicised categories, stereotypes and casual racism that produced and maintained ethno-racial hierarchies inherent in Zionism. Some of my Mizrahi informants used religion as a source for their exclusionary attitudes towards Russian- speaking Israelis who were accused of having doubtful Jewishness and consequently weaker national loyalty. In response, both Russian immigrants in the ulpan and Russian-speaking Israeli informants fashioned themselves as devoted and loyal Zionists. Mizrahi residents redeployed the

oriental stereotypes they had been subjected to in their stigmatisation of Arab minority populations. By supporting colonial subjugation of internal Arab others they reproduced the colonial logic underlying Israeli ethno-nationalism.

Existential insecurity was an ordinary situation in Kiryat Shemona. Fear and anxiety about future wars were brought to the level of daily life. In addition, the Israeli government perpetuated imagined threats, further intensifying the sense of living exposed on a frontier. Fear and suspicion, coupled with their marginalised socio-economic and ethno-cultural position, made the local presence of the army, synagogue life and family networks sources of security and strength. Whereas my informants expressed great mistrust in their elected officials, the IDF was largely praised as the keeper of the Israeli future. Right-wing nationalistic political parties who promised well-being through settler-colonial practices, such as Likud and Yisrael Beitenu, gained massive support. Ethno-nationalist discourses had appeal for the less mobile Mizrahim who had been marginalised in the Zionist nation-building ethos.

In the ordinary context of real and imagined threats, self-fashioning oneself as strong demonstrated my informants' desire to position themselves across and within the Israeli nation. 'Strength' as a spoken and behavioural value was utilised as a response to their marginalised ethno-class position in a stigmatised periphery and to empower themselves as essential members of the nation. There was a significant divergence between their self-fashioning as strong and steadfast and the way in which campaigns and politicians presented them as passive victims of conflict.

Even in the ordinary context of conflict and existential insecurity, not all forms of self-identification were national or directed at the nation-state. The concern with being 'civilised' was an equally important axis of identification along with other large-scale ideological categories of national, ethnic and religious affiliations. Mizrahi residents were contesting hegemonic Ashkenazi Israeliness by identifying with Arab or 'Persian' homelands and traditions. Simultaneously, they were paradoxically reinforcing a Eurocentric boundary of Israeliness with their concern about being civilised, a shared manifestation of settler colonial societies. Competing claims to civilisation illustrate the lasting effects of colonial Zionism on self-identification. Although related to the ethnic hierarchies intrinsic to Zionism, the nation was not an explicit frame of reference in these claims.

The many non-nationalist self-identifications and situations I observed in Kiryat Shemona demonstrated that social actors did not think or behave in nationalist terms at

all times. This challenges Billig's theory of nationalism as an "omnipresent, endemic condition" (Billig 1995:6). Billig analyses rhetoric and discourse to show the pervasive and often unnoticed power of nationalism. His theory is useful for analysing the material presence of the nationalist 'stuff' such as flags, news, sporting events, etc., and how these evoke reminders of nationhood. However in this view, social actors are always nationalist if not mindfully so. Nationalism, even in a 'hot' nationalist context, was only intermittently salient. This thesis has, therefore, presented a revisionist perspective of theories of everyday nationalism in the discipline of social anthropology. The anthropology of nationalism must specify how and in what situations the nation is called upon to give meaning to a variety of needs and expectations.

In ordinary times of existential insecurity, there were competing claims over Israeliness. This observation challenges Benedict Anderson's outline of the nation as a "deep horizontal comradeship" (1983:7). His theory is not sufficient in describing multiple and shifting identifications that are not centered on the nation-state. Although the myth of the Israeli nation as socially, morally, culturally and religiously united was celebrated during state commemoration events glorifying the nation-in-arms, the nation was in reality highly challenged and characterised by deep socio-economic and ethno-religious cleavages. During wartime, ethno-religious, regional, political and class divisions were temporarily undermined and national unity heightened. National campaigns, politicians and religious leaders aligned the border towns to the central regions and temporarily moved the Mizrahim from the margins of exclusion to the centre of inclusion. While marginalised in the periphery, the residents in Kiryat Shemona still aspired to be part of the national frontier ethos. They fashioned themselves into nationalised subjects and supported the fighting, despite the suffering they faced. Their creative self-fashioning thus reinforced the logic of militaristic ethno-nationalism.

Although Arabness was publically stigmatised, my older Mizrahi informants in Kiryat Shemona felt strongly connected to the country where they were born or where their ancestors had came from. This transnational belonging and longing also emerged out of conditions within Israel and Kiryat Shemona. Disillusionment with the socio-political life and a sense of entrapment at the margins of Israeli society, strengthened the need for projects and imagined futures which transgress the nation-state. My informants created symbolic and material attachments to idealised Arab homelands or a utopian American Western future, thus bypassing the rhetoric of rootedness in Zionist ideology.

Self-appointed cosmopolitan claims and nostalgically remembered pasts show how cultural flows do not align themselves neatly within national borders or nation states. Although dual and multiple belongings can be analysed as hybridity, the vast majority of my informants did not feel fragmented but effortlessly faced in several directions at once.

Even if there is a multiplicity of cultures and languages in Israel, there is no real multicultural ideology. Israel's laws resulting in discrimination and daily exclusion against a large number of its citizens reflect the ethnocratic character of the state. Real multiculturalism that includes the equal treatment of all citizens would necessitate a social and ideological revolution in the Israeli context. The national elite would have to abandon its grandiose Zionist scheme of building a homogenous, secular Jewish, Western society and adopt an ideology of multiculturalism, where citizenship and full civil rights need not imply a particular cultural or religious identity. The state and its schools would need to totally abandon the convenient coherence of collective memory and encourage its citizens' capabilities to hold multiple and sometimes conflicting narratives. Open acknowledgment of ethnic and socio-economic divisions is a prerequisite for the struggle against the colonial ethnocracy and the inequalities and racism it produces. Israeliness must be open to all citizens and transformed to adapt to the cultural reality it dominates. Marginalised citizens, both Jews and non-Jews, must be able to be included in the centre of power of the hegemonic Israeli culture. For Mizrahim, the transformation to a multicultural ideology would mean greater socio-economic equality, greater incorporation of Arab-Judeo culture and traditions into the national culture and treatment as equals. The abandonment of ethnocratic ideology would potentially weaken the stigma attached to the East and produce a shift towards a more inclusive society and future regional reconciliation.

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